The Depiction of Social Inequalities in British School Stories of the 1940s and 1950s

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THE DEPICTION OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN BRITISH SCHOOL STORIES OF THE 1940s AND 1950s

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Education

December 2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Andrew Stables for his initial input and guidance in my research. My gratitude is extended to Dr.Katie Dunworth and Elisabeth Barratt Hacking for taking up the baton and providing the necessary support and encouragement to complete the thesis.

My research would not have been possible without the unflinching team work of the Inter-Library Loan office at the University of Bath whose dedication to the retrieval of the most obscure references over several years has been wholly admirable. I am also indebted to the courteous assistance of the library staff at the Roehampton Institute, London; the British Library at Boston Spa, Yorkshire and the Bodleian Library, Oxford. My thanks also go to Karen Dyde, Librarian at Monkton Prep School, Bath, for sharing her widespread knowledge of children's literature so generously.

The thesis is dedicated to my late parents, my late brother, Peter, and my late sister, Gillian. Finally, I should like to express my thankfulness to my wife and daughter who have been most supportive throughout the time that it has taken me to complete my research.

Abstract

My thesis is based on a study of British school stories which were published between 1940 and 1960. I have chosen discourse analysis as a strategy to extract the elements of the genre which give an insight into the social inequalities that existed in Britain during that time. In the study I analyse a selection of boys' and girls' school stories in order to gain a balanced view of the social issues that are inherent in the novels and compare how the authors created their individual characters who represent a cross-section of British social classes and cultures. Issues such as class snobbery and the inequalities with regard to educational opportunities that are enacted by the fictional characters are examined based on evidence from a wide range of primary and secondary sources. My research has provided sufficient evidence for me to propose a close correlation between the school story texts and the social consequences of the tripartite system introduced by the 1944 Education Act.

An exploration of children's literature forms the basis of the thesis from which the school story genre emerges as a separate entity. Whilst other related research on the school story has touched upon aspects that include feminism, masculinity and relationships in general, the focus on social class and elitism has not been as prominent although it is a central feature of the genre. Through the selection of boys' and girls' stories, I have been able to evaluate how the school story represented a contemporary literary document whose language, both spoken and narrative, portrayed the social inequalities in a manner that was equally overt and covert.

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Preface

This study is based on my interest in the school story genre and the values that were inherent in British society during and after World War Two. My intention is to analyse what defined the middle classes between 1940 and 1960 with regard to their social aspirations and the cultural representation in a cross-section of school stories that were published in the same period. The theme of class has been touched upon by such authors as Robert Leeson in 'Children's Books and Class Society' (1976) and P.W. Musgrave in his study of the school story, 'From Brown to Bunter' The Life and Death of the School Story (1985). My contribution to the issue of class and the social inequalities that were recognised in the 1940s and 1950s is original in that my research, based upon primary and secondary sources, explores Britain's social apartheid and its relevance to contemporary school stories.

Two specific research papers have formed a basis for my own research, namely Spolton's *The Secondary School in Post-War Fiction* (1963) and Hollowell's paper entitled *For the Honour of the School: Class in the Girls' School Story* (2014). In the first of these papers Spolton focuses on the educational system and the effects of the 1944 Education Act particularly. Although the texts that he refers to are based mainly in state secondary schools, especially secondary modern schools, my research incorporates a more comprehensive range of texts which includes preparatory schools. Whilst public schools dominate the subject matter of the majority of boys' and girls' school stories the absence of school novels which relate to the technical school is acknowledged by Spolton as not appearing "to be represented in fiction at all", (Spolton, 1963:132) and this corroborated by Kirkpatrick whose extensive bibliography of boys' school fiction, 1742-1990, which does not list any novels pertaining to technical schools. Although Spolton's paper touches upon the political influences of the 1944 Act my research extends to include how the characteristics of the tripartite system,

with the exception of technical schools, were portrayed in the school story. Topics such as social mobility, class distinctions and educational opportunities are platforms on which an analysis of the novels is made.

Hollowell's paper serves as an appropriate introduction to the depiction of class in the school novel. Her choice of Brent-Dyer's *A Problem for the Chalet School* (1956) is used to explore the acceptance of a working-class character into a school that is dominated by middle-class pupils. Brent-Dyer is also one of my chosen authors and in common with Hollowell's statement that the novel was published "in a time of post-war social change, particularly around class and social mobility" (Hollowell, 2014:312) my research into both girls' and boys' school stories analyses their sociological content in an attempt to illustrate the authors' portrayal of acceptance or rejection based on a pupil's class background.

The research of Beverley Skeggs on feminist issues has also been influential in my understanding and appreciation of the issues raised in the girls' school story. Her work of 2004 entitled *Class, Self, Culture* has been particularly informative on the perspectives of class and values. Her statement that "values give time and place their recognizable cultural unity" (Skeggs, 2004:13) is particularly relevant to my research as the thesis evaluates how the values of British society in the 1940s and 1950s are represented in the school stories that were published in those decades.

The novels appeared at a time when the genre had reached its peak of popularity and was entering a period of steady decline. Literature and social history have been interrelated for centuries and my thesis focuses on the close relationship between the school story and social divisions.

The ideology of class and social status will be examined through the process of discourse analysis which, according to John Stephens ('Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction' 1992, p.8) can be a tool to examine children's fiction with a methodology that includes narrative fiction and an overriding

interest in ideology, an aspect that is further endorsed in my explanation of my chosen methodology. Using discourse analysis I aim to reveal the way that discourses of the school story genre are pervaded by ideology in which the school story acts as an agent of socialisation be it in an overt or covert manner with a particular emphasis on the school story text serving a social function of defining and sustaining class values and social attitudes. As children's literature is constantly concerned with social issues and values it is unsurprising that the school story provides an ideal vehicle to present them in a closed setting that lends itself to close scrutiny.

Within the range of genres that make up the children's literature that was available at the time the school story genre has received mixed critical reviews. As social documents the school stories reflected changing social attitudes and my chosen stories for analysis represent and construct a range of schools in their narratives which are context dependent as a result of social and educational developments. The analysis of both boys' and girls' school stories will allow me to argue how a story can be used as an agent of socialisation which can be a conscious and deliberate process. A close textual analysis of the various texts will reveal that the school story genre exposed a good deal about British society and its attitudes, in particular how the revised educational system following the 1944 Act polarised the attitudes of the working- and middle-classes whereby the inequalities of educational opportunity were manifested by the introduction of the 11- plus exam. Not only were the public schools unaffected by the tripartite system but their social status was enhanced by a Conservative government that was composed mainly of ex-public schoolboys who did not wish to alter the status-quo of public schoolboys reaching the higher echelons of power in industry and government.

Many notable school story novels were published in the 1940s and 1950s whose authors made key contributions to fictionalising life in a variety of schools in the private and maintained sectors. The task of selecting a cross-

section of these novels is detailed in the following chapter. The main thrust of the thesis will make a critical assessment of the class distinctions that are implied in such novels and adds to the body of scholarly work by contextualising the depiction of social divisions that existed in contemporary Britain. Building on Hollowell's article the breadth of texts will help to illustrate the significant markers of class. The thesis will consequently focus on the sociological content of the novels which is a factor that has been largely underplayed by critics of the genre. Authors such as Trease and Hildick seek to inculcate particular social values and attitudes that are available at the time of writing such as the dignifying experience of industrial working-class boys.

The organisation of my thesis follows a progression of chapters relating to the various aspects of the school story and how the genre shares a history contemporary with and parallel to the growth of the school system. The school story grew to fruition because of quite specific developments in society and in education, not least the repercussions of the 1944 Education Act.

The representation of the class structure in the novels is a key component of my thesis. Skeggs has identified how class distinctions have been portrayed in general literature:

"The working-class have a long history of being represented by their distance from it, usually through associations with restraint, repression, reasonableness, modesty and denial." (Skeggs, 2004:99)

Through my analysis of school stories which depict a variety of schools and a wide range of characters I will add to an existing body of knowledge of children's literature in its social context. By referring to texts that relate to all classes in British society the thesis deals with the inter-relationship between social and educational inequalities and evaluates how the various authors

present schools as a social organisation in which such inequalities are depicted through narrative discourse and interpersonal relationships.

The school stories of the 1950s particularly were written in the context of educational debate which had been stimulated by World War Two which, in turn, triggered changes in social attitudes. My thesis will show how the two developments are inextricably linked within and outside the context of the school story genre. The thesis will make an additional contribution to an area which has hitherto received scant research.

Chapter One outlines the methodology that was employed in the writing of the thesis. It details how the novels were selected for the study and describes how the sample was analysed. An explanation of discourse analysis provides the reader with an informative insight into the nature of the analysis. As an introduction to the thesis the chapter outlines my approach to the research which entailed the use of primary and secondary material from a variety of sources including university libraries, the British Library and the Bodleian Library.

Chapter Two examines the broader parameters of children's fiction and what constitutes literary ideology. It examines how an author constructs a text using a range of literary devices with an emphasis on characterisation. It discusses how an understanding of the reader response theory is central to the interpretation or deconstruction of a text. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the place of textuality in children's literature and how language communicates cultural value. The issue of subjectivity, relating to the identity of both the author and the reader, is central to the appreciation of children's literature. This particular chapter provides the foundation stone for the thesis in that it explores the basic relationship between literary discourse and ideology.

Chapter Three contextualises the school story in terms of historical background from its early beginnings until 1940. It highlights how popular

juvenile fiction in the form of magazines served as a precursor of the school story by its emphasis on social and moral issues. As the theme of social inequalities is based on school stories published between 1940 and 1960 the relevance of this chapter provides an overview of the evolution of themes involving morality and class and later explores more socially explicit themes such as the tripartite system. In tracing the development of this particular sub-genre of children's literature it contributes to the development of the thesis by outlining the prevalence of class privilege and its connection with reality.

Chapter Four focuses on the purveyors of the school story to its juvenile readership. The chapter examines the philosophy of the publishing houses and the support network of public and school libraries which acted to promote and encourage reading in general. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse how the infrastructure of the publishers and libraries functioned as essential components in bringing popular literature, particularly the school story, to its readers. The comparative appeal of the school story is also discussed in relation to other genres which were available between 1940 and 1960.

Chapter Five explores the notions of class in the 1940s. I look at a selection of school stories that span the decade and which were written for boys and girls. It takes into account the social changes that were prevalent in Britain during and after the war and to what extent the school stories reflected attitudes to class and social inequalities. A similar structure is employed in Chapter Six whereby stories published in the 1950s are analysed with a particular focus on the theme of class and education since the passing of the 1944 Education Act. These chapters are the culmination of my background research in children's literature in general and the analysis of the school story specifically to make an informed assessment with regard to the depiction of social inequalities in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s.

The final chapter will serve to make a final statement after all the evidence from the preceding chapters is assessed in relation to the theme of the thesis.

I am looking at the inequalities pertaining to class stratification in the school story and how relationships within the stories reflected the divisions. The stories that I analyse represent and construct a variety of schools ranging from preparatory and public school through to grammar and secondary modern.

Several authors who were former schoolteachers themselves have been able to reflect on their own experiences and have clearly written their stories with a child audience in mind. With regard to school stories in general Gill Frith argues that they were considered “exclusive, expensive and enclosed, they represent a sealed, rigidly hierarchical world in which ‘normality’ is white and middle-class.” (Frith, 1985: 115) This quotation serves as an important reminder of the place that the school story secures in its treatment of class in British society.

The thesis takes a further step forward from previous research and commentary of the school story with its particular focus of a sociological nature whereby accentuation of class and educational variance during the 1940s and 1950s are seen as being inextricably linked.

I hope that this exploration of class discrimination through the discourses and ideologies of the school story will contribute towards a renewed recognition of the genre’s place in children’s literature.

Chapter 1

Methodology

“Society is always to some extent involved in a struggle between competing influences, and discourse is created within that ‘site of struggle’. (*Stephen Bax, 2011)*

1.1 Introduction

In my examination of the texts I will consider how the diversity of the social class is depicted through the use of characterisation and language but, more importantly, how the narratives point towards the inequalities that existed in British society in the two decades that followed the outbreak of World War Two.

Although the readers of the school novels would be aware that the stories were fictions and were read for their entertainment value my choice of the school story genre is based on the premise that several authors portrayed the various levels of society by their distinctive characterisations. The stories that are represented in the thesis reinforce the fact that despite the formulaic structure of the school novel and the stereotypes that emerge from the narrative the underlying argument is that they stand as an expression of British values at a time of radical changes to the nation’s educational system and social expectations.

The inequality in secondary education is central to the thesis. The writings of Hildick, Tring and Chetham-Strode, for example, reflect that post-war Britain was still a two-class nation in which the working-class were by far the larger. Based on the tone of the novels it would have been highly likely that they would have supported a political agenda which would have resulted in a classless society and where educational planning would have a major role to play in social engineering.

This chapter is designed as a description of the points when decisions had to be made and an explanation of why these particular choices were made. In this way an explanation of my analysis of the stories will serve to clarify the basis of the thesis.

1.2 Aims of the research – the research questions

In broad terms the thesis provides a critical assessment of class in the school story genre by which social divisions of British society are constructed through a selection of texts that were published between 1940 and 1960. The theoretical framework in which my interpretation is construed is based upon a combination of classic Marxist perspectives relating to the values of an anti-discriminatory society in which selection in schooling and the promotion of competitive marketing in secondary education is prohibitive.

Integral to the issue of social and educational inequalities are the concepts of class identity and class consciousness. In the case of the former concept Savage argues that from the 1950s well over 90 per cent of people identified themselves as members of one class or another. (Savage, 2000:34) Class consciousness, on the other hand, describes groups of individuals being conscious of members of the same class and of having common class interests. (Giddens & Mackenzie, 1982:40) The thesis will explore the direct link between social status and its causal link between social status and its causal links with educational inequality. The concepts of class identity and class consciousness form the material basis of ideology in that they have a direct bearing on the equality of opportunity within education.

The issue of class conflict that is endemic to the capitalist system is central to my main research question. Based on these attributes of class and social inequality it can be expressed as follows:
In what ways, if at all, does the school story from 1940 – 1960 directly or indirectly present class conflict within British society?

My research will be based on the analysis of both boys' and girls' school stories that were published between 1940 and 1960. By focusing on characterisation using critical discourse analysis the research will aim to assess the manner in which the authors portrayed class distinctions as well as the portrayal of the pervasive stereotype such as the snob who boasts about her family wealth, whether it be true or imagined. From a gender perspective, however, it will be seen that the girls' story endorses the distinction between the various social classes as much as it is portrayed in the boys' school story.

Through the use of critical discourse analysis the thesis will explore the extent to which economic inequality was depicted in both the girls' and boys' school story. It will explore the manner in which the stories were underpinned by a range of ideologies that promoted the values of privilege at the cost of the working-class.

Other issues such as educational inequality and social mobility are also examined in order to assess the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

In order to operationalise the main research question the subsidiary questions that I will set out to answer are:

1. Based on the school story to what extent was education a vehicle for social mobility?
2. Does the school story support sociological studies carried out in the 1940s and 1950s which analysed the economic and class differences in England such as the study carried out by Glass in 1949?
3. To what extent does the school story portray the different cultural values of the British class system between 1940 and 1960?

These questions will form the foundation of my research in which the Marxist perspective of class consciousness will be employed in order to analyse the social divisions of British society. As a result the thesis will provide a critical

re-evaluation of the school story in its portrayal of class as a “major anchor for social inequalities.” (Savage, 2000:36) Moreover, the thesis will elucidate the significance of class in the school story from an appropriate class structural perspective through a critical evaluation of pupils and their school experiences in both the private and state sectors.

1.3 The sample

The selection of novels for this study was guided by my working knowledge of the school story fiction that had been gained in my own teaching across the age range from 9 to 14. Robert J. Kirkpatrick’s annotated bibliography of boys’ school fiction, 1742-1990, ‘Bullies, Beaks and Flannelled Fools’ (1990) and ‘The Encyclopaedia of Boys’ School Stories’ (2000) proved to be useful references with regard to the boys’ stories. ‘The Encyclopaedia of Girls’ School Stories’ Volume 1 (2000) provided invaluable source material for the girls’ stories.

My choice of novels was one of practicality in that my intention was to compile a list of school stories by a variety of authors which were published throughout the 1940s and 1950s rather than being clustered around any one point within the chosen timescale. Both the Encyclopedia of Girls School Stories (2000), edited by Sue Sims and Hilary Clare and the Encyclopedia of Boys’ School Stories (2000), edited by Robert Kirkpatrick, contain the titles of all the school stories published in Britain up until 2000. To give some indication of the size of the collection from which I could select a reasonable sample I have chosen Kirkpatrick’s *Bullies, Beaks and Flanneled Fools 1742-1990* (1990) to denote the number of boys’ school stories published between 1940 and 1960.

1940 – 1949: 161 novels 1950 – 1959: 112 novels

As the school stories can be characterised as a distinct form of discourse which has a dual disposition toward reality as described in studies by Spolton (1963), Mathieson & White (1971) and Musgrave (1985) besides novels

which bear a tangential relationship to ‘real life’ (Brazil, Brent-Dyer) I was confident that the purposive sample (Butcher, 1965:23) chosen for the study would allow me to make specific inferences regarding the school story and class. The corpus of school stories provided a clearly defined and listable population from which to draw my sample. Furthermore, as an accepted feature of qualitative research the novels were based on my judgment of their typicality and those that were based on their storylines being devoid of serious consideration for sociological analysis. Reference to critical studies has been made to substantiate my own choice of school stories which is fairly representative of the school stories published between 1940 and 1960.It is important to state, however, that the sample complements Hollowell’s paper (2014) in which she makes a critical assessment of class in the girls’ school story whereby “class divisions are not just reflected but constructed through particular texts.” (Hollowell, 2014:311)

In a similar manner to Mathieson & Whiteside’s study, *The Secondary Modern School in Fiction* (1971) and Spolton (1963) the diversity of British society as depicted in the grammar school (‘common room’) novels and the secondary modern novels I would argue that my sample of school stories ranging from the preparatory school to the secondary modern school further elucidates the results of further and more fundamental educational change. The novels of Tring, Trease, Hildick and Chetham-Strode are representative of novelists who, as Spolton has previously suggested, reveal “something of the state of mind of a section of our community who feel they have been treated as second best at the secondary stage of education.” (Spolton, 1963:127) Hildick’s creation of Jim Starling and Triggs’ Barry Briggs symbolise their authors’ mouthpieces to complement Mathieson and Whiteside’s selection of novels that contained an “angry protest against a variety of evils in working class life and the inadequacy of the schools’ attempts to educate slum children.” (Mathieson & Whiteside, 1971:285) The issue of grammar school selection portrayed in Tring’s *Barry’s Exciting Year* (1951) exemplified just one component of social and educational change which had a significant bearing on social class.

The focus of social discrimination is a major component of the critical discourse analysis of which Wodak argues that “language provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in power in hierarchical social structures.” (Seale, *et al*, 2007:187) As a representative sample of school stories published between 1940 and 1960 I would argue that the representativeness of social inequality in the novels is worthy of generalizability in the study’s concluding chapter. They will also challenge the more benign sociological analyses of the school story (Osborne,1947; Kiberd,2008; Petzold,1990). The overriding criterion for the selection of my chosen texts relied upon their specific relevance to the socio-economic circumstances of the families concerned.

Although the selected novels form the basis of the critical discourse analysis it is equally important to stress the relevance of the academic and research literature that underpins the analysis. The reference to academic papers that have focused on school story-related issues such as feminism, diversity of gender roles and relationships have been essential to maintain the balance between the authors’ viewpoints and literary critics, important as they are.
The socio-political issues that I have pursued have complemented the more traditional lines of literary analysis to provide an alternative appreciation of the genre.

Another distinction is that the novels were suitable for the younger reader, aged between 9 and 14, not the adult reader. Trade publications such as ‘The Bookseller’ and ‘The Junior Bookshelf’ have helped to validate the target audience. The publications were consulted in the reading rooms of the British Library in Boston Spa, Yorkshire. They provided contemporary critical analysis of the children’s literature that was in vogue during the 1940s and 1950s.

For those novels that were finally selected for this study I wanted to ensure that there was a balance between girls’ and boys’ stories as the purpose of

the study was to analyse how social inequalities were represented by male and female authors who made their social comment within the narrative. This is a notion that is argued by Stephens who believes that “writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience.” (Stephens, 1992: 3)

1.4 An approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA)

It is a method of analysis that allows me to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed by language use, or in discourse. Bearing in mind that the thesis is a study of a corpus of school stories within a social and historical context I have adopted a similar stance to Skinner whose view is that “any literary work will be bound...to bear some relation to the values of its age, to its prevailing assumptions, beliefs and attitudes.” (Skinner, 1975:221) An understanding of the social context in which the school stories were written has been an essential element in helping to provide a critical evaluation and elucidation of the texts. An interpretation of the school novels needs to be informed by a history of the period and a history of education in particular, although it would be prudent to acknowledge that history is itself a matter of interpretation. Such details will be included in the introductory sections in the relevant chapters, particularly Chapters 5 and 6.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is therefore constructed with the combination of an historical and cultural analysis of Britain in the 1940s and 1950s in which the former construct is concerned with the social changes and differences over the two decades and the cultural content is examining how literature (the school story) is an inextricable part of the culture in which it was written and received and should thus be studied as part of that culture. In this respect the discussion of the novels will focus on the conventions and notations which characterize the form.

Various authors of critical discourse analysis have influenced my methodology in interpreting the political, social and cultural implications of the chosen texts. With regard to the encoding of the political, social and cultural positions of which the authors may be unaware and whose positions will be inscribed in the language I have found Hoey's definition of critical discourse analysis to be particularly persuasive in that "texts can be defined as the visible evidence of a reasonably self-contained purposeful interaction between one or more writers and one or more readers, in which the writer(s) control the interaction and produce most of (characteristically all) the language." (Hoey, 2001:11) As all the texts that I have chosen are compositions of written discourse it is important to understand that the whole interaction can be described as discourse and the text is considered as "the site of an interaction between a writer and readers which the writer controls." (Hoey, 2001:13) It is a model of interaction which is best illustrated by fictional writers and school stories in particular. The formulaic structure of the school story genre certainly facilitated the regularity of patterning and enhanced the readers' chances of guessing correctly what is going to happen next. Critical discourse analysis regards language as being conceived as one element of the social process that is dialectically interconnected with others, such as social change. Consequently the school stories will be viewed as texts "as a moment in the material production and reproduction of social life." (Fairclough, 2010:304) The sociological analysis of the school stories will form a significant focus of materialist social critique.

As my chosen texts were published within two decades references will be made to their intertextual relations, as well as the socio-political implications and consequences. The social factors that pertain to the school story genre are central to the theme of the thesis and by adapting a heuristic approach to the study I have attempted to use critical discourse analysis to consider the texts in context to identify their impact in broad terms. This approach will serve to depict the well-defined class system of post-war Britain, "the haphazard and unsatisfactory product of historical and class compromises."

(Rubenstein, 1988:52) Language, for example, plays a key role in portraying aspects of Englishness such as 'respectability'. The research on class undertaken by Beverley Skeggs has been an invaluable resource relating to aspects of class and the notion of Englishness in the school story. (Skeggs, 1997: 3)

The quality of British culture during the 1940s and 1950s is an issue which is a key element of the thesis. The relationship between the child's home and educational backgrounds is very relevant to an analysis of the school story genre. Education and British society are inseparable elements in the wider world of social inequality as Raymond Williams clearly states that:

'It is a question of whether we can grasp the real nature of our society, or whether we persist in social and educational patterns based on a limited ruling class, a middle professional class, a large operative class, cemented by forces that cannot be changed." (Williams, 1961: 155)

The relationship between social mobility and educational mobility is brought into question based on my reading of the boys' and girls' school stories. The language used by a broad range of authors helps to point towards the link between the shape of Britain's social structure and the importance of education within it.

1.5 The Methodology

The methodology that I have adopted relating to critical discourse analysis is largely based on the principles advocated by Wodak, Meyer and Fairclough,(2009, 2010). In doing so I have focused on larger units than just isolated words and sentences resulting in the basic units of analysis relating to "texts, discourses, conversations." (Wodak & Meyer, 2009:2) This approach reflects the main thrust of critical discourse analysis which is not concerned solely in analysing a linguistic unit *per se* but in studying social

phenomena which requires a multi-methodical approach. As discourse covers a wide range of linguistic representatives including policies, text, talk and topic-related conversations in relation to a genre I took the decision to adopt a critical discourse analysis approach as the school story texts formed a basis whereby “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned...and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people.” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997:258) As the crux of the thesis relates to social inequalities in the 1940s and 1950s the notion of discourse is especially relevant as “discursive practices...can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social classes...through the ways in which they represent things and position people.” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997:258) In choosing the school story for textual analysis in which the term ‘discourse’ is used for written texts I will be adopting the core concept of critical theory that is advocated by Wodak and Meyer, in that “critical theory should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity.” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009:6)

1.5.1 Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA)

The Dialectical-Relational Approach focuses on social conflict in the Marxian tradition and attempts to detect its linguistic manifestations in discourses in specific elements of dominance and difference. The approach to linguistic analysis relies upon a problem-oriented approach in which the initial stage involves the identification and explanation of the social problem which should be analysed.

Social relations, cultural values and social identities are dialectically related elements of social practice and critical discourse analysis is concerned with “the analysis of the dialectical relationships between semiosis and other elements of social practice.” Wodak & Meyer, 2009:27) As the methodology of critical discourse analysis is in the hermeneutic tradition, that is, the rejection of causal explanation in favour of interpretive understanding, it seems quite appropriate that this approach has been adopted for this thesis

as Skinner posits that “the relationship between a text and its appropriate context is an instance of the hermeneutic circle.” (Skinner, 1975:227)

1.5.2 Stages and procedures of the analysis

The procedure that relates to the dialectical-relational approach to my analysis of the texts is largely pragmatic whereby the first step is to identify and describe the social problem that is to be analysed.

The stages can be broadly summarised as follows:
1. To focus upon a specific social problem in its semiotic aspect.
2. To identify the obstacles to addressing the social injustice.
3. To consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the social injustice.
4. To identify possible ways past the obstacles to social equality.
(Adapted from Wodak & Meyer, 2009:167)

As the thesis is focusing on the social and educational inequalities of post-war Britain, it does not focus on specific linguistic items which are common to most critical discourse analysis approaches. Whilst there is little specific discussion about quality criteria with regard to critical discourse analysis the general approach aims to elucidate the discursive aspects of social disparities and inequalities. It is an approach that involves a shared interest in the social processes of power, hierarchy-building, exclusion and subordination – all aspects that impinge upon the depiction of social inequalities in the school story.

Fairclough argues that the primary focus of critical discourse analysis is “the effect of power relations and inequalities in producing social wrongs and in particular on discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities.” (Fairclough, 2010:8) Within this focus the thesis will aim to illustrate aspects of social life which are open to interpretation which will assist in evaluating the extent of the social and educational inequalities.

Qualitative analysis is considered to be the bedrock of discourse analysis and this will be the touchstone of my analysis of the school story texts. If it is agreed that from an orthodox Marxist position social existence determines consciousness then I would argue that discourses are effective in transferring the knowledge on which collective and individual consciousness feeds. Fairclough opines that Marxism has been “a significant partner-in-dialogue for CDA given the focus on capitalism.” (Fairclough, 2010:305) and it is therefore an appropriate tool with which to analyse the school story with regard to the main research question of the thesis. The discourse strand is the main focus of the analysis and in this case will be social and educational inequality. The discourse plane refers to the discourse materials that are being analysed. With regard to critical discourse analysis a single text has minimal effect. By selecting a larger range of texts a discourse based on the school story with its recurring contents and repetition of statements will lead to the emergence of an informed conclusion and a more sustained effect.

It is vital to understand that discourse deals with authentic language and with language that is in context. The texts that will be discussed in this section are all instances of language that are written and spoken and that the school stories serve as examples of how language can be used in the constructing of viewpoint and ideology. Children’s fiction comprises a range of texts that play their part in the struggle between competing ideologies and points of view. This section is intended to illustrate how discourse is used as a constructionist device to show how the world around us is constructed. In relation to what has already been written about British society in the 1940s and the 1950s and how the school story portrayed elements of the social fabric Bax would argue that “society is always to some extent involved in a struggle between competing influences, and discourse is created within that ‘site of struggle.’ (Bax, 2011: 33) The texts that will be examined will illustrate the accuracy of Bax’s statement.

The school stories that are represented in this analysis have not been studied in isolation but in terms of their intertextuality as well as with reference to their social implications. If one accepts Paltridge's statement that "a genre is a kind of text" (Paltridge, 2006: 84) then my approach to adopting the school story genre as my discourse will be to analyse the social interaction of the characters as well as the linguistic elements. Indeed, it is, in essence, a genre that structures its narratives around the physical and social environments of school settings. By adopting a heuristic approach my intention will be to examine each novel in a systematic way "drawing on a range of approaches, techniques and procedures to suit the text and context at hand." (Bax, 2011: 95) The context in which at least half of my sample of school stories were written and published during the Second World War and that in itself would present to the reader an indication of the authors' personal view of a nation at war and how Britain's social order was being challenged.

1.5.3 Procedure of the analysis

With regard to the various stages of the critical discourse analysis the following procedures will be adhered to. Stage 1 will address the nature and sources of the social wrongs that are identified in the texts. This will pertain to the more general inequalities such as the unequal distribution of the nation's wealth and disparity of life chances which were associated with the social class hierarchy. These will be discerned by reference to the nuances of the characters' language and their social backgrounds.

In Stage 2 the analysis will consider a discourse view of language as one element of social life which is dialectically connected with the economic and political aspects of British social history. Added to this will be a combined linguistic/semiotic analysis of the texts by which one is able to look beyond the narrative and interpret signs of body language and emphasis of words which will give added meaning to the text.

Stage 3 will consider whether the social/educational inequality is inherent in the social order that existed in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. This issue will be closely linked with the Marxist ideology in so far as discourse contributes to sustaining particular relations of power and domination.

The final Stage 4 of the analysis will move from the negative to a positive critique in which there will be an opportunity to assess how the obstacles were addressed on a political level to lessen the social wrong in question.

My interpretive approach to the reading of texts provides the keystone to my research. The assumptions that are made are supported by reference to sociological and historical evidence which, when viewed in relation to the characters' experiences, provide a more rounded picture of the values and attitudes apparent in school stories.

The analysis of my chosen texts is based on an interpretive approach to the reading of the texts. It is a methodology that is the basis of discourse analysis which, according to Stephens (1992), is a tool to examine the language of children's fiction "through which society seeks to exemplify and inculcate its current values and attitudes." (Stephens, 1992: 8) Moreover, Stephens argues that discourse analysis is a means by which children's fiction can be examined with a methodology that includes narrative theory, critical linguistics and an overriding interest in ideology and subjectivity in which ideology reflects the beliefs and assumptions of which "the author is, or may be, unaware." (Stephens, 1992: 9) In this respect critical discourse analysis serves as both the methodology and focus of the thesis.

Stephens' view of the story acting as an agent of socialisation further underpins my aim to show how the school story reflected the social divisions which existed in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. The ideology of class and status is also conveyed through focalisation by which the reader aligns

themselves with a focalising character. If Stephens' view that a function of children's literature is to socialise its readers is accepted and the reader internalises the perceptions and attitudes of the focaliser the outcome will be that the text will "inculcate particular social values and attitudes available at the time of production." (Stephens, 1992: 69) The analysis of language within its narrative context serves as a linchpin of the thesis. In my assumption that language plays a crucial role in the process of constructing reality, where discourse is viewed as a 'constructionist device' (Bax, 2011:32), I have endeavoured to interpret the school story genre as a window on contemporary society. Throughout my reading of the novels I have been keenly aware of how the texts constructed one-sided pictures based on an assumption that language has a key role in the process of constructing reality.

The essence of critical social research centres on addressing the social injustices and inequalities of the day by analysing their sources and causes and the possibilities of overcoming them. In doing so the process seeks to explain the dialectical relations between the dominant and subservient sections of society in the establishment and the change of unequal power relations. With specific reference to the school story the research touches upon the exclusion of some people by others and its bearing upon the general well-being of pupils in the state and private systems of education. To a large extent critical discourse analysis in the study is shaped by Marxism in that the analysis of language in relation to the power relations and ideologies of capitalism is a concern throughout the thesis.

Within my analysis the concepts of ideology and power will also be discussed in relation to the texts. My approach to the textual analysis will be from a Marxist perspective as I believe that the social and educational inequalities that were present in British society during the 1940s and 1950s could be more accurately illustrated from a Marxist view of ideologies in that

"ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation."

Furthermore, the “analysis of texts is an important aspect of ideological analysis and critique...”(Fairclough, 2003:218) Power is a concept that is central for critical discourse analysis and I will be analysing the language use of teachers and children who are equally responsible for and voice the existence of inequalities. As power is primarily about the effects of differences in hierarchical social structures the school story will reflect the relation between social power and language. More specifically my analysis of the texts will be influenced by the dialectical-relational approach focusing on social conflict in the Marxian tradition.

I have been careful not to allow myself to make rash generalisations with regard to cultural analysis. According to Clifford Geertz cultural analysis is “intrinsically incomplete” (Geertz, 1973: 29) and this stance has influenced my approach to using the school story genre to understand the past as a set of relations between political, economic and social events. My study, which tries to account for those relations, should provide a useful document in reawakening a once popular literary form which deserves to be evaluated from a modern day perspective.

With regard to the sociological analysis of the novels it is clear that the school story genre possessed a structure which was, in part, formulaic. As fictional representations of school culture the stories explore themes that are relevant to both schooling and to the socialisation of children of all ages.

As my study is historical in nature it is essentially viewing a sub-genre of children’s literature that was enjoyed by a substantial proportion of adolescent readers who were representative of the various social classes in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. The choosing of these decades for my research is based on an appreciation that the school story was still a relatively popular choice of reading for adolescents although the boys’ stories were not quite as favoured as the girls’ stories which was certainly the case during the 1950s. Added to this is that any decade will bring social and political changes to a country’s existing structures and the nation’s literature

will often reflect such transitions. By viewing the school story from a wider perspective and consider the relatively major repercussions of the 1944 Education Act in the context of educational opportunities within an unequal society the two decades present quite contrasting backgrounds.

Whereas the school story links the two decades as a common denominator it has been intriguing to assess how the contemporary authors were able to incorporate their ideologies into their writing and make their comment on Britain's social fabric through their characters. Whichever decade is arguably considered as the 'golden age' of children's literature my choice of the 1940s and 1950s appertains to a momentous phase in British social history.

The accessibility of a past culture is central to this study although Raymond Williams' comments highlight the limitations of historical research:

"There is the lived culture of a particular time and place, only fully accessible to those living in that time and place. There is the recorded culture, of every kind, from art to the most everyday facts: the culture of a period. There is also, as the factor connecting lived culture and period cultures, the culture of the selective tradition." (Williams, 1961: 49)

The procedure which I employed in gaining the necessary insight into my proposed study involved an initial reading of a selection of school stories in addition to reference to secondary sources. A close textual analysis of the various novels involved focalisation, a narrative strategy which Stephens describes as the process whereby the "reader's own selfhood is effaced and the reader internalises the perceptions and attitudes of the focaliser." (Stephens, 1992: 68) thereby being reconstituted as a subject within the text. This is the central tenet in the doctrine of the implied reader which is examined in a later chapter.

The values of the schools and social settings were considered and whether they were consistent with the goals of particular characters. It was essential

in the light of the study to assess how the setting and actions of certain characters reflected the expectations of certain individuals and how class divisions may have been accentuated.

In addition to social class, the economic, political and educational frameworks of British society from 1940 to 1960 are considered with regard to the development of the school story genre. As a specific and, moreover, a central example of social change the development of Britain's educational system from 1944 onwards is a key issue that impinges upon the school story. Equally salient is the portrayal of Britain's class structure within the novels whereby the narrative invites the reader to enter a range of scenarios in which values held by the British public are depicted through a combination of word and action.

With regard to the form of the novel several questions were asked to discern what assumptions the author was making about the experiences and sensibilities of the reader. Whether or not the story actually presented an ideal or critical vision of school life was incidental, the main thrust of the study was to analyse the extent to which the story portrayed the social inequalities of contemporary Britain.

Bearing in mind the above considerations, alongside the historical and sociological interpretations of the 1940s and 1950s in general, I was then in a position to reflect on the values and assumptions that the novels were dramatising. The thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge relating to the school story genre in that it embraces and elucidates the contemporary political intransigences and social inequalities which the novels portrayed in fiction. It has been necessary to look beyond the rather formulaic structure of the novel in order to appreciate the authors' craft in weaving their social comment into the narrative.

The analysis of the texts have revealed that some of the authors like Chetham-Strode were prepared to incorporate political overtones into their

writing which did not necessarily detract from the entertainment value of the novel or play. Based on the chapters in which discourse analysis is utilised to offer an insight into the use of spoken and written discourse the thesis has attempted to show that the school story of the 1940s and 1950s was a genre from which lessons concerning social inequality may be learned and where post-war fiction can give useful insights into comparative education as illustrated by writers such as Allan and Trease.

1.5.4 Social Class – a definition

For the purposes of the critical discourse analysis and the thesis overall it is necessary to provide a definition of social class which underpinned the social fabric of Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. Hollowell argues that "Class in the school story is usually assumed to be about money and access, in line with traditional views of class and wealth." (Hollowell, 2014:312) In a similar vein Bernstein posits that schools reproduced the inequalities of social class by institutionalising the cultural criteria of sections of the dominant class as portrayed in the public school stories. Furthermore, his paper entitled Class and Pedagogies: Visible and Invisible explores the notion that "educational transmissions embody class ideologies which are crucial to the cultural reproduction of class relations." (Bernstein, 1977:16) Whilst these views on class relate to the defining attributes of privilege and its direct link to educational opportunities I have taken into account the basic Marxist principle of class conflict and change.

Although Cole argues that Britain's social structure is "too complicated for easy breaking up into stratified social classes" (Cole, 1955:48) I have objectively based my theorising of social classes during the 1940s and 1950s using the criteria of the father's occupational status and residence combined with an awareness of the inequalities in the distribution of prestige, wealth and power. Although this may be lacking in scientific precision the rationale is that one's occupation is a major determinator of one's life chances. The

following characteristics will help to differentiate the backgrounds which are represented by the school story child characters and their families:

Elite class: a class designation to indicate groups that hold influential positions at the top level of society. Members of this class possess land or mercantile wealth. Applicable to hereditary aristocracy.

Middle class: Can be sub-divided into upper, middle and lower. Comprises skilled workers and self-employed. Often referred to as the petty bourgeoisie.

Working class: Composed mainly of unskilled manual workers invariably living in sub-standard living conditions and generally lacking motivation to enhance their economic prospects.

The following rough profile of broad occupational categories serves as a sociological illustration of how the state “is the political embodiment of the values and interests of the dominant class.” (Parkin, 1971:27) The profile complements Cole’s summary of the British Class Structure in 1951. (Cole, 1955:150)

1. Professional, managerial, and administrative
2. Semi-professional and lower administrative
3. Routine white-collar
4. Skilled manual
5. Semi-skilled manual
6. Unskilled manual

(Parkin, 1971:19)

In the process of referring to ‘class’ and ‘status’ it is necessary to also allude to the overall differentiation of the British population of the 1940s and 1950s with regard to ‘life chances’ and ‘life styles’. The imagery of class as represented in the school stories depict a system of broadly correlated socio-economic inequalities and sub-cultural differences.

The class structure that existed in Britain between 1940 and 1960 can be described as a specific ordering of a system of class stratification whereas

class position is attributed to the position of an individual in terms of their economic resources. This interpretation is in line with the basic Marxist principle by which classes are defined by their relationship to the means of production. These are elements of social class which will be drawn out in Chapters 5 and 6.

The analysis is limited to the family and education as class is a determining factor which affects all agencies of cultural reproduction. The school story is a significant source of children's literature to illustrate that school is a society in itself and can be regarded as "the interpreter of the pattern of communities." (Reeves, 1946:58) In support of Bernstein's argument that "class is a fundamental category of exclusion" which "is reproduced in various ways in schools, through the social context and forms of transmission of education" (Bernstein, 1977:28) the school story provides an ideal literary format to portray the fact that "the ideologies of education are still the ideologies of class." (Bernstein, 1977:124) Representation of class stratification post-1939 continued to associate the upper class with images of glamour, success and wealth, attributes that dominated the social backgrounds of the public school story. This was in stark contrast to the working-class pupil who had to be content with accepting second-best or third-best. The second best refers to the grammar school, a pale imitation of the public school system which favoured the brighter children from middle-class families. The third best was the secondary modern school in which the qualifications of the teaching staff were often inferior to those teachers in the grammar and public schools. In this respect the family background and social class were regarded as the most important determinants of 'educability' and educational 'achievement'. (Ryder & Silver, 1970:241) It was a situation that mirrored the English educational system which "reflects and reinforces the inequalities of the economic system...It weakens the hold of mere wealth, which is a good thing. It fosters native snobbery, which is a bad thing. And it reflects the unsystematic and highly individualistic character of English life." (Brogan, 1943:58) Whilst a selection of school stories would treat the anomalies of the class system with a certain degree of sensitivity the earlier

success of the genre could be envisaged by Rose's statement that "by 1940 one of every eight books read by boys whose education was due to be terminated at age 14 was a school story." In the case of the girl reader the proportion was one in four. (Rose, 2001:322-323) Although the public school stories conveyed a public school ethos to Board school children the novels, rather than convert them to imperialists, would have reinforced the fact that income, wealth and power were distributed unequally throughout Britain. This would be realized on a more practical level with the ill-founded optimism in the wake of Butler's 1944 Education Act.

The distinguishing factors of the upper-middle class pupils who attended Frank Richards' Greyfriars School combine to form the basis of an elite in British society whereby there is "an assumption of superiority and exclusiveness in the field of personal relations." (Cole, 1955:103) The inclusion of hereditary aristocracy by way of titled pupils affirm the status of the privileged few who possess a sartorial and cultural characteristic which separates them from the lower middle-class pupils of Allan's and Brazil's novels. Whilst their education may be of a higher standard than most working-class people their larger vocabulary and circle of friends would distinguish them from their working-class contemporaries as portrayed in the novels written by Tring and Hildick.

If social class can be broadly regarded as "a location within a stratified and hierarchical social structure of distribution of jobs and income" (Cole, ed. 2006:211) the educational system in Britain still replicated the division of the social structure into working / lower middle / upper middle / upper classes despite the potential for mobility through the educational system post-1944. In this respect Stead posits the view that "as each class successively achieved the dominant position in society, so the institutions, including the educational system, of each class came to be viewed as those of a phase or a class, as in reality they are." (Stead, 1942:12) The attraction of social mobility in promoting one's social status and economic reward has been depicted in school stories for generations as being a principal aim in life. The

genteel middle classes embodied the quintessential English values of respectability whilst their individuality was accepted as a central characteristic of their class which allowed them to “sit in judgment of others.” (Skeggs, 1997:3) Although the concept of the middle class is not altogether a matter of income or education it is a class that supported individualism and sanctioned the institutional order whilst showing an apprehensive awareness of the increasing power of the state. (King & Raynor, 1981:58) This contrasted with the overriding influence at the top level of the upper class, whilst holding a position of influence at the top level of British society, was in an advantageous position to control the affairs of the entire society.

From a Marxist viewpoint the issue of class has been a hotbed for Britain’s social inequalities. The direct link with the nation’s class-based educational system since the nineteenth century has sustained a growing sense of class identity which was palpable prior to the Second World War. In common with the Marxist principle of conflict and change the conflict perspectives that such a system created emphasised the inequalities of educational opportunities which necessitated the need for social change.

The culture capital which Bourdieu saw as forming the basis of a cultural power that transmits the values and ideas of a dominant culture resulting in the legitimising of the dominant class’ interest also added to the underlying realisation that the middle-class child would more likely gain more success in Britain’s educational system. The conflict that the Marxists envisaged was based upon the argument that “education transmits the language and behaviour of the ruling class.” (McKenzie, 2001:49) The advantages thus gained by the child of a middle-class family with regard to attitude and language would summarily combine to exclude the vast majority of working-class children from gaining a foothold in the grammar school system and the eventual breaking down of class barriers.

In summary, the subjective contours of social class in British society between 1940 and 1960 have been shaped by political events, traditions and national

characteristics which have resulted in images of class concerning power, wealth, culture and lifestyles. The British educational system, directly under the control of the state, was deemed suitable by the passing of the 1944 Act as an instrument for social change as well as altering the structure of educational opportunity. The correlation between the nation's social structure and its educational system in the 1950s is viewed by Cole in that "Anyone who sets out to understand the social structure of Great Britain today must begin by paying close attention to the educational system." (Cole, 1955:107) The correlation between the subjective contours of class and major social inequalities become more apparent in the characters embodied in the school stories whose behaviour reflect the existence of the class system.

The chapters detailed in the Preface provide the format of the thesis leading to a conclusion by which the school story texts would have presented a special context for the operation of ideologies as well as encoding certain social practices.

Chapter 2

The Nature of Children's Literature
The place of the school story genre

"To a child who is intent upon reading all books are children's books."*(E.V. Lucas: Fisher, 1964)*

1.1 Introduction

In common with literature that is written for an adult readership children's literature also has its own genres and in this regard this particular study will be focusing primarily on the 'school story' genre. Through the analysis of a selection of boys' and girls' stories the genre will be evaluated in its own right with regard to the social and educational developments that took place in Britain between 1940 and 1960. The preceding chapter has outlined how this is to be carried out. In this chapter it is intended to discuss the nature of children's literature in its general form and refer to the 'school story' specifically as an example of a recognised genre within the range of children's books that were written in that period.

In order to lay the foundations of this thesis it is necessary to define the term 'Children's Literature' through a variety of perspectives. On a simplistic level they are stories that children enjoy and typically they have a child or a childlike character at their heart. It is a definition that works up to a certain age but there are also adult books that children read and children's books that adults enjoy reading. Aidan Chambers makes the point that it is not definitions that are needed but the development of a critical method "which will take account of the child as reader." (Townsend, 1980: 250-251) Michael Rosen, a former Children's Laureate, formulated his definition in stating that

“I think of children’s books as not so much for children, but as the filling that goes between the child world and the adult world. One way or another, all children’s books have to negotiate that space.” (Eccleshare, 2009: 9) It is certainly a definition that acknowledges that the precise borders of those worlds may shift and be redrawn as notions of what is suitable for children shift. Issues that may have been considered inappropriate in one decade may be regarded as perfectly acceptable decades later. A more pragmatic perspective on children’s literature is offered by John Rowe Townsend who assigns responsibility to the publisher in deciding what is a children’s book:

‘In the short run it appears that, for better or for worse, the publisher decides. If he puts a book on the children’s list, it will be reviewed as a children’s book and will be read by children (or young people), if it is read at all. If he puts it on the adult list, it will not – or at least not immediately.’

(Townsend, 1980: 197)

It might be argued that what counts as literature is the product of a writer’s imagination, a work of fiction and we must regard children’s books not as toys or merchandise but as a form of literature. The art of successful ‘storying’ is something that has entranced child readers for generations and it is important at this stage to recognise the part that literature can play in a child’s life.

1.2 A Working definition of children’s literature

A broad definition of children’s literature can be summarised as ‘literature for children’. The literature contains a vast range of writing, both fictional and factual, that includes drama, poetry, biographies and autobiographies as well as novels. Essentially it is literature that has been written by adults *for* children and *to* children.

A common assumption is that young children need literature in order to structure and give some clarification to their own perceptions of the world. Many child readers will seek out novels that reflect their own experience where the hero of the story may provide a type of emotional sustenance, where the protagonist goes through experiences that are familiar to the reader. Saxby acknowledges such a response to literature as he asserts that the child will read *beyond* the text by “interpreting it in the light of their own experience.” (Saxby, 1997: 73) As this thesis concentrates on the authors’ depiction of social changes and attitudes between 1940 and 1960 social realism is of central importance. As the culture of contemporary Britain over the two decades is portrayed by a variety of authors with contrasting social backgrounds so the issues of that era are liable to affect the writers’ thinking and the style of their writing. Children’s literature is not wholly divorced from the realities of the world although many of the children’s novels that were published between 1940 and 1960 were deemed to be ‘conservative and safe.’ (Saxby, 1997: 263)

A child’s author is one who is recognised by their craft of writing a text that has a complexity and particularity which is linked to the author’s visions of the primary world he lives in and the secondary world that he creates. Through fictionalising events that relate directly to real life the narrative can be regarded as “a primary act of mind” which is transferred to art from life, in effect a means of “organising human experience.” (Meek, Warlow, Barton, 1977: 12) By writing for children the author is allowing the child to access the experience through reading. In keeping with authorship in general there is an implicit assumption that a children’s author intends something by the narrative and is in control of that work.

Children's books can also be regarded as an educative source whereby the child reader will usually opt for the kind of books that teach them about adult popular taste. In this respect the author, as educator, will aim to enhance the intellectual and moral tastes of his reader by enabling him to have access to books which have a human and spiritual dimension and which helps him to understand the human condition. A child's author is therefore aiming at creating educated readers who love books and who become aware of the technique of learning by reading. Cullingford argues that the underlying purpose of education is to "elevate the capacities of human beings towards the intellectual understanding and compassion of which they are capable." (Cullingford, 1998: 196) To this purpose books which challenge the reader have at least the potential to make a difference to the growth of understanding in readers.

The conventional conception of the author as a "genial creator" who bestows his work on the reader with "infinite wealth and generosity" (Bennett, 2005: 27) is challenged by Barthes' theory which abolishes authorial voice, where "It is language which speaks, not the author." (Barthes, 1995: 126) To add to the argument concerning the theory of authorship and authority Booth's notion of 'the implied author' (Bennett, 2005: 13) conveys the image or idea of the author suggested by the text. Whichever side of the fence the reader prefers the underlying relationship between the author and his reader is one that is sustained by a mutual agreement that one should tell and the other should interpret the telling.

The school story is illustrative of a genre that centres entirely on children as its focus with adults featuring in minor roles. In this respect the child reader is drawn into a world where he can experience a degree of identification as it is a narrative whose subject matter is children. This, too, is an essential factor

in children's literature where the author is cognizant of the priority of the child character. The children's author recognises the importance of individuality, of subjectivity and subjective experience. Engaging with the child reader through a series of incidents and the interplay of characters the author's choice of subject matter is crucial. Writing for children is the overriding rationale for entering into story writing whilst writing about children is the central concern of the literature itself.

For the majority of children's books there is a fusion of fiction and reality and the inclusion of children in the narrative allows the young reader to enter into the experience of the participants as well as allowing her to empathise with them as fellow human-beings. Knowing that the characters of the novel are not real people but only personae created by the author she is none the less reacting to the action and experience of the characters. With regards to Enid Blyton, for example, there is an expectation that her readers will "align themselves with the Five and with the values they represent" (Dixon, 1977: 51) although, for the most part, the Five are scarcely distinguished as separate beings, certainly as far as their social views are concerned. Their prep school background and plucky natures can present as many barriers as allowing the reader to enter into their gung-ho world of adventure.

All of the fiction written for children today is about children. Owing to the extensive nature of this particular subject matter the question of identification is common to fiction of all kinds, adult or juvenile. Many authors will see identification as being the key to one's enjoyment of a work of fiction and it is therefore possible to see why so many good children's works of fiction deal with child characters.

The following list put forward by McDowell encapsulates not only the qualitative differences between children's and adult fiction but also highlights the quintessential qualities of the school story genre:

1. They favour an active rather than a passive treatment.
2. They favour dialogue and incident over description and introspection.
3. Child protagonists are the rule.
4. Conversations are much used.
5. The story develops within a clear-cut moral code.
6. They tend to be optimistic rather than pessimistic.
7. The language is child-oriented.
8. The plots are of a distinctive order.
   (McDowell, 1976: 147)

The school story genre is illustrative of how the focus of children's literature is of the moment and its subject matter comprises a contemporary sociocultural document. In this respect children's literature is a powerful resource to engage the reader's interest in cultural perspectives whether it is didactic in nature or presented in a format that is designed wholly for entertainment.

In conclusion, the defining qualification of a children's author is that the issues contained within the stories can significantly contribute to the cognitive development and affective growth of his reader. The quasi-social bond that is made between the author and reader is created by the writer directing the reader's attention to the action and experience of his characters and, in doing so, implicitly invites the reader to share his attitude.

1.3 The Constitution of Children's Literature

To provide a precise definition of 'children's literature' is not a straightforward task as it would appear that there is no general consensus among those who are involved in this field. John Rowe Townsend's empirical distinction, for example, leaves a quite imprecise resolution when he declares that:

"The only practical definition of a children's book today – absurd as it sounds – is 'a book which appears on the children's list of a publisher.'" (Hunt,1980: 18)

An equally general definition such as 'books used by children' would be equally misleading as this could include virtually everything. The distinction must therefore lie with the integral process of the writing, transmission and response in and to children's books, and the possibility of making significant generalisations about a child's way of reading.

With regard to arriving at a resolution to the problem of defining the constitution of children's literature is to regard children's books as a 'genre' of literature. In this respect the generic characteristics will affect both the expectations and perceptions of the readers and the ways in which writers choose to express what they wish to express.

Margaret Marshall's definition of children's literature is that "whether it is fiction or non-fiction, [it] is part of the larger world of literature and can be written, read, studied, analysed, taught and promoted in the same way as literature for adults, or any other age or subject group." (Marshall, 1988: 60) Marshall's generic characteristics of children's literature include the following:

- By format – hardback, paperback editions
- By genre – school story, adventure, fantasy, science fiction, history
- By broad theme or specific content in non-fiction
- By the age of the reader – sub-divided by reading age or interest age
- By codes of symbol – Dewey classification system, colour coding for different subjects
- Publisher's series – fiction and information books
- Miscellaneous categories – language, TV tie-ins, popularity.

(Marshall, 1988:60)

It is also important at this stage to describe the parameters of children's literature, to clarify what actually 'counts' in this very specific area of literature. The nature of children's literature can be sub-divided into various categories including the stories' construction, authorship, issues raised in books and child readership. When referring to the readership I will be including readers who are aged from 9 to 13 years of age on the understanding that the age of the individual does not necessarily relate to the maturity and where it is assumed that children's books are written for all levels of experience.

1.3.1 Story Plots

Christopher Booker identifies seven basic plots that occur in children's fiction:

1. Overcoming the monster;
2. Rags to riches;
3. The quest;
4. Voyage and return;
5. Comedy;
6. Tragedy;
7. Rebirth. (Booker, 2004: vii)

Overcoming the monster

Each type of story is distinguished by certain characteristics that give it its identity. Stories about overcoming a monster, for example, comprise a threat posed by a monstrous figure that is finally defeated by the hero/heroine figure. Kevin Crossley-Holland's version of *Beowulf* (1968) is an electrifying translation of the Anglo-Saxon epic. In this instance the reader is not only treated to the author's marvellous images of Beowulf's voyage to defeat the clawed monster Grendel and his mother the sea-wolf but is doubly rewarded by Charles Keeping's sinister black and white drawings.

Rags to riches

In rags–to-riches stories the reader encounters a character who is initially quite humble and disregarded raised to an elevated position. An example of contemporary teenage fiction is Anita Desai's novel *The Village by the Sea* (1982) which tells of an Indian brother and sister who struggle to keep their family alive in an impoverished but heartbreakingly beautiful village near Bombay, now Mumbai. Twelve year-old Hari escapes to the city where he endures cruel deprivation but does find work and learn a trade. This could also serve as an example of 'voyage and return' as his experiences ultimately enables him to rise above the squalor of his formative years and return to his roots better equipped to continue his life.

The Quest

The quest, or journey, is described by Booker as a story in which 'the hero and his companions go through a succession of terrible, often near-fatal ordeals, followed by periods of respite when they recoup their strength, receiving succour and guidance from friendly helpers to send them on their way.' (Gamble & Yates, 2008: 122) Although Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is an admirable example of such a narrative structure I have chosen instead Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising (1973)* which resonates with the magic and myth of Celtic and Arthurian legends. The protagonist, Will, finds himself in an ancient world where he is surrounded by evil. In his quest to help the forces of Light to overcome Dark he lives a parallel life as one of the Old Ones. Through a combination of following his instinct and using his powerful gifts Will utilises his strengths to evade those who want to control him. Will's mentor, Great-Uncle Merriam, is a Merlinlike figure who is central to guiding Will in his quest in Cooper's exploration of the mythic world of ancient Britain. The novel's plot offers the reader an insight into human nature as well as examining the ambiguities of people's motivations.

Voyage and Return

The voyage and return journey shares a common theme with the quest although the structure differs as the hero/ine may stray into a completely new surrounding unexpectedly. In this particular structure the protagonist travels away from familiar surroundings, meets a threat, and then returns home to the familiar world. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Peter Pan* and *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* are fantasies in which this structure underpins the narrative. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island (1883)* is a classic work of children's literature and is a perfect example of this structure. Jim Hawkins' adventures on board the *Hispaniola* and the skulduggery that he encounters on Treasure Island amongst an unsavoury group of pirates combine to create a timeless story of good-hearted courage with a continuously menacing air. It is little wonder that he felt that he had grown up a little on his return home.

Comedy

Comedy cannot be simply explained as a 'funny story' as the plots can often be quite complicated. Booker's perception of comedy can be summarised by the following:

- we see as a little world in which people have passed under a shadow of confusion, uncertainty and frustration, and are shut off from one another;
- confusion gets worse until the pressure of darkness is at its most acute and everyone is in a nightmarish tangle;
- finally, with the coming to light of things not previously recognized, perceptions are dramatically changed. The shadows are dispelled, the situation is miraculously transformed and the little world is brought together in a state of joyful union. (Gamble & Yates, 2008:67)

Anne Fine's *Madame Doubtfire* (1987) is the bitingly funny story of a family caught up in the painful aftermath of an acrimonious divorce. Caught in the

crossfire between the father, Daniel, and their mother, Miranda, the three children each have their own strategies for dealing with the barrage of sarcastic observations that characterise parental interactions. The sparkling dialogue between articulate and flawed characters is a key feature of a novel that serves as a brutally honest depiction of contemporary family life.

Tragedy

Tragedy is a story which ends in death and Booker identifies structures that underpin all tragedy:

i) Anticipation stage
ii) Dream stage
iii) Frustration stage
iv) Nightmare stage
v) Destruction or death-wish stage. (Booker, 2004: 156-7)

As an illustration of this structure Malorie Blackman explores racism, including hatred and violence, in the first of her quartet of books, *'Noughts and Crosses'* (2001). She has created a bleak world in which both sides of the racial divide suffer, either directly or through the opportunities they have lost to connect with each other as human beings.

The *anticipation* stage follows the progress of Callum and Sephy's childhood relationship as it develops into a love relationship which forms the *dream* stage. Events that come after this episode leads to pressures from their families which causes the *frustration* stage. Both Sephy and Callum are perceived as betraying their roots, even more so when Callum's father and brother become involved in reversing the balance of power through terrorism. The *nightmare* stage evolves as Callum is wrongly convicted of being involved with the terrorist group and is hanged. The birth of Sephy's and Callum's daughter after Callum's execution signals the *destruction* stage

although their daughter could be regarded as a symbol of hope in Blackman's dystopia.

Rebirth

The rebirth story, as championed by Catherine Storr in *Marianne Dreams (1958)* is seen by Booker as following a sequence which can be described as:

- a young hero or heroine falls under the shadow of a dark power.
- for a while, all may seem to go reasonably well, the threat may even have receded;
- but eventually it approaches again in full force, until the hero or heroine is seen imprisoned in the state of living death;
- this continues for a long time, when it seems that the dark power has completely triumphed;
- but finally the miraculous redemption. (Booker, 2004: 204)

As Marianne is advised by her doctor to stay in bed for several weeks she passes the time by drawing pictures with a special pencil. Her dreams are dominated by her pictures which depict a boy named Mark who is made known to Marianne through her tutor, Mrs Chesterfield. He has polio and is unable to leave his house. After befriending Mark through playing cards and enjoying the rural scenery she becomes jealous. The boulders that are visible from the house become threatening and dangerous after Marianne decides to draw eyes on them. In turn the Watchers have a life of their own despite Marianne's attempts to add or cross out in her drawings. It is these Watchers that eventually give the novel its happy ending the force of liberation.

Booker, however, does not advocate that all stories fit neatly into such patterns at all times when he states: "There are many stories which are shaped by more than one 'basic plot' at a time (there are even a small

number, including *The Lord of the Rings* (*1954*), which include all seven of the plots...) There are still other stories which are shaped only by part of such a plot." (Gamble & Yates, 2008: 69)

The creation of plots that will captivate a child reader's interest relies on the writer's craft of being able to usher the reader into another world as well as widen his experience and help to cultivate his sympathies. Ideally, the plot will allow for plausible but easily detectable chicanery on the part of certain characters and where various archetypal threats and promises in the plots will correspond to the child's own basic fears and hopes. A recurring aspect of a school story plot, for example, will be the writer's uncluttered and preferably humorous attitude towards adults, especially where this tends to cut them down nearer to child size. The ultimate challenge for a children's author is to allow the story to carry things to their logical conclusion and squeeze every drop of humour or excitement from a situation, often beyond the limits an adult is likely to tolerate.

In addition to simple plot level Alan Garner is an author who believes that a book must be written for all levels of experience. To reach this goal he advocates that: "Anything else that comes through in the book is pure bonus. An onion can be peeled down through its layers, but it always, at every layer, an onion, whole in itself. I try to write onions." (Meek, Warlow & Marton, 1977: 149) In William Mayne's case "the best part of a book is the plot...I don't bother with the characters until I have begun." (Townsend, 1971: 137) Whichever route the plot may take, however, its enactment would not be possible without the array of characters that permeate a book.

1.3.2 Characters

The word 'character' is derived from a Greek word meaning 'to mark or engrave' by which a character trait is an impression made on a person, an

impression that later makes itself known by the way a person acts. In addition to their behaviour judgments are also made on the basis of how a person speaks, their appearance, what a person says and the opinions of others. The evidence used can be either valid or invalid.

Characters in literature are developed in similar ways and the reader assesses them through:

- names;
- description, appearance;
- thought and speech;
- placement in a specific setting;
- style, language, vocabulary choice;
- assessment and comment made by other characters;
- the author's personal assessment and comment.

(Gamble & Yates, 2008: 91)

Quite often it is the author's intention that the reader's sympathy can be usually won over by the story's protagonist which is made all the more plausible by the antagonist arousing the reader's anger and disdain in response to their antics.

1.3.3 Names

In fiction the naming of characters requires the same care and attention afforded by parents when choosing their children's names. David Lodge writes, "In a novel names are never neutral. They always signify, if it is only ordinariness." (Lodge, 1993: 37)

The association of name and imagery is a popular device in children's literature and an example of this can be shown by the main characters, Thomas Oakley and William Beech, in Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mister*

Tom (1981). Thomas is shortened to the monosyllabic ‘Tom’ which gives it a strong sound. The association of their respective surnames with trees is not coincidental either. Oak trees grow strong and live to a ripe old age whilst the wood of the beech tree is more malleable. Thus the names suit the old loner and the young abused boy who is evacuated and given over to his care. In this respect Magorian’s novel is a masterpiece of characterisation.

Interestingly several girls’ nicknames in the girls’ school stories are boys’ names, such as ‘Clem’, ‘Dickie’ and ‘Tim’. Putting to one side the superficiality of the name changes the reader may equate such a convention with social equality or aspiration towards male values.

1.3.4 Description and Appearance

Descriptions of characters’ physique tend to be clear-cut: the focus is typically on one or a few salient characteristics, as shown in the following example from Alan Garner’s *The Moon of Gomrath.* The opening chapter concludes with the description of Cadellin Silverbrow, a great wizard and guardian of the secret places of the Edge:

“Beside the iron gates stood an old man. He was very tall, and thin as a young birch tree. His white robes, and long white hair and beard flew with the gale, and he held a white staff in his hands.”

(*The Moon of Gomrath* Garner, 1963: 14)

Such descriptions provide instant, clear impressions of the characters as either attractive or unattractive physically, so that readers do not have to dwell on the characters’ physique more than on their minds.

1.3.5 Thought and Speech

Characters are introduced and developed through a range of techniques and conventions. In addition to revealing their thoughts a character can be developed through very careful selection of what they say and how they say it. Megan McDonald, for example, speaks for a large cross-section of children's authors when she talks getting the dialogue 'right': "Dialogue is probably the most important thing to me. It really puts me off when I read a book and the kids sound as though they are adults – that's the adult writer coming through...When I'm in a restaurant or riding a bus I'm quiet myself but listen to what people say and how they say it. To me the most important thing is hearing the character's voice in my head." (Gamble & Yates, 2008: 93)

The more the character is built up through action the less necessary it becomes for the author to add a lot of attribution to the dialogue. Psychological interaction between character and reader is promoted in texts which encourage readers to make inferences about character intentions, feelings, motives and psychological traits which are not explicitly mentioned, but which are suggested by the behaviour, speech and thought of the characters.

1.3.6 Placement in a specific setting

The setting of a novel revolves around the time and place in which the action occurs. Whilst children's novels are not entirely dependent on specific settings the titles of some novels such as Clive King's *Stig of the Dump* or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* indicate that the setting is integral to the story. The settings of C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* novels add to the symbolism that the characters bring to the story. In David Almond's novel *Kit's*

Wilderness the reader is immediately immersed into the setting from the introductory sentences:

‘In Stoneygate there was a wilderness. It was an empty space between the houses and the river, where the ancient pit had been. That’s where we played Askew’s game, the game called Death.’

(*Kit’s Wilderness* Almond 1999: 5)

Whether the setting is integral to the story or acts as a backcloth against which the storyline is played out the primary function of a setting is to add authentic detail, as in historical fiction, or the believable creation of a secondary world that can be found in science fiction novels.

1.3.7 Settings

One of the most important ingredients in works of fiction is their setting. The child reader can reconstruct the place, the atmosphere and the circumstances of novels they have read. Part of the enjoyment of reading fictional texts is for the reader to analyse the relationship between the setting and the plot.

The choice of setting in children’s fiction offers the reader access to experiences beyond their everyday lives and where the choice can often be related to the author’s impulse that makes him write for children. Such experiences are not merely escapist but may also provide a means by which children can reflect on their own lives and come to a view of their place in the world.

With regard to the early school stories, the setting was more often within the confines of an expensive boarding school. Mayne’s *A Swarm in May* (1955)

was set in a cathedral choir school based on Canterbury Cathedral Choir School. The novel recreates a closed, complete and satisfying world that is populated by a large cast of characters who, in common with many books of that genre, rarely looked beyond the small enclosed world of school. The writers of such stories became concerned with the everyday scene and the experience of the majority of their readers.

With regard to school stories the choice and depiction of the school setting is a significant aspect of the novel. It has a direct connection with the overall quality of the writing as the author gradually reveals the ethos of the school. It serves as a background against which the staff and pupils enact their experiences of the school and from which the reader is able to deduce the ethos of the school from the shared attitudes of the teachers and scholars. This issue will be analysed in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

1.3.8 Style, Language and Vocabulary choice

The literary style of children's novels is very much dependent on the genre which the writer has chosen although Anatole France would argue otherwise as she advocates that "when you write for children do not adopt a style for the occasion. Think your best and write your best." (Meek, Warlow & Barton, 1977: 148) What the writer wants to say often springs from the subconscious and the style in which the text is written may vary according to the theme and to the broadly intended reader.

Some people may consider that for children, language and vocabulary will involve the choice of simple words and shortening sentences to facilitate easier understanding. Literature that is written specifically for the less able reader, for example, will comprise vocabulary to fit the age or stage of the child reader. On a more general level the author will use a variety of sentence structure and vocabulary. Even short sentences and simple words

can be used effectively for the most competent of readers. It is, after all, a well-known construction used in the adult literature of Steinbeck and Hemingway. The words can convey a wealth of meaning and especially when combined with a pattern of speech that indicates the regional location of the story and use of language that brings to life the characters and events. David Almond's *Kit's Wilderness* is set in north east England and the characters' dialogue accurately mirrors the regional dialect:

'He shook his head and grinned into the past. "Go on, hinny, let's have a song," he said.' (Almond, 1999:57)

"Christopher. What's going on with you? What is it, Kit?"
"Nowt," I spat. "Bloody nowt." (Almond, 1999: 67)

The language has a simplicity that is rich and is effective in the context. Whilst there is no one style of writing, language or range of vocabulary that indicates a text is specifically intended for children a critic would argue that an author who uses language not only to convey literal meaning but also to stimulate a range of potential child perception and response should be regarded as a creator of good children's literature.

1.3.9 Assessment and comment made by other characters

Children's novels serve a multitude of purposes depending on the author's intention but an overriding role of literature is to enhance children's understanding of complex human behaviour by enabling the reader to experience a diverse range of characters and relationships. The interaction of the characters within novels help to engender character development and the reader will respond accordingly to the subtleties and inconsistencies of a character's personality. The author will orchestrate the relationships by means of other characters commenting on their friends, or otherwise, rather

like a chairman of a meeting. Barbara Willard, for example, envisages that “the perfect author should be like a good chairman, handling a lively meeting with tact and firmness...keeping the whole meeting on the move without obtruding, and winding up in the time allowed on a conclusion satisfactory to all.” (Blishen [Ed.] 1975: 160) In most cases the concept of a romantic or ideal childhood, such as that espoused by Blyton and her Famous Five, has proved to be the most persistent portrayal of how child characters behave towards one another.

Society, however, can have a polluting influence on the innocent child and the breakdown of relationships is starkly revealed in Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* or Anne Fine’s *The Tulip Touch* where delinquent behaviour have devastating consequences. Parental influences as well as peer influences combine to give the novel’s protagonist, Natalie, a rich source from which she ultimately develops the moral conviction to make choices based on her own judgments. Her end of term report confirms Natalie’s resolution to conform to society’s rules now that she is beyond Tulip’s sphere of influence:

“After a period of confusion, Natalie Barnes has made a prodigious effort to go on to better and better things, and we all wish her well.” (Fine, 1996: 182) A similar scene of reconciliation is enacted at the end of *Lord of the Flies* when the full realisation of the boys’ primitive behaviour and resulting deaths overcomes Ralph: “And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.” (Golding, 1954: 225)

The reader’s understanding and appreciation of a character relies to a large extent upon the reactions of other characters in the novel to each specific character. With specific regard to children’s literature the style of writing and use of vocabulary by an author are presented from an angle which matches

the child's perspective and whatever is regarded by critics as 'good' literature is underpinned by that which also increases the reader's perception.

1.4 The author's personal assessment and comments

Children's literature abounds with lifelike characters who are representations constructed by writers to reflect their values and beliefs. From the author's point of view the act of writing is not a neutral or objective activity and the fictional characters are, by definition, not real people. On the occasions when a writer's value system is congruent with our own, however, we will not recognise the construction but only when they hold markedly different values is it made visible. On this basis we cannot judge character in terms of authenticity and accuracy but only in relation to the values that it represents and the social implications.

The question of whether an author means what she says and whether her audience should be concerned with what she thinks she means in the first place is an issue that has been investigated by literary theorists such as Barthes and Foucault.

Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author (1967)* highlights his argument against incorporating the author's intentions and autobiographical context in an interpretation of text: 'it is logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person of the author.' (Barthes, 1967: 143) This notion of 'anti-intentionalism' (Bennett, 2005: 4) describes clearly the stance that Barthes adopts by 'removing' the author and claiming that deciphering the text becomes a futile exercise. The process of distancing the author from his personal life is further endorsed by Barthes' insistence that the writer is 'born simultaneously with the text, is in no way

equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate.' (Barthes, 1967: 145)

On a broader sphere literature is arguably a means to 'reflect cultural ideologies'. (Winch, Johnston, Holliday, Ljungdahl. March, 2001: 309) The school stories of the 1940s and 1950s provided the contemporary reader with a sociological document of the present in which the author's ideology is expressed through a central character by whom the reader is likely to receive the implicit ideology of the author. The ideological messages of this particular genre centre on forming positive relationships in surroundings that have the potential to exacerbate social inequalities. The attitudes of British society of that period are often unconsciously reflected by authors such as Antonia Forest, Angela Brazil and Gunby Hadath yet their novels represented the diversity of childhood that were contained in themes that are ideologically constructed.

The responsibility of the author to his reader is an issue that has been consistently debated. Jill Paton Walsh is one author who argues that 'the writer is an outsider' (Walsh, 1973: 31) as she feels that 'since no one is responsible for us, we are responsible to nobody.' (Walsh, 1973: 32) Far from believing that children's literature should be didactic Walsh asserts that 'a novel is the result of freely following the process, of exploring and experimenting to discover truth. Such explorations are not for those didactic souls who know the truth before they start.' (Walsh, 1973: 34) Ideally, 'a novel is written only when the process is set free from the author's fixed ideas and followed where it must go.' (Walsh, 1973: 34) In this respect Walsh's comments attest to the fact that she has few, if any, expectations of any consensus of interpretation amongst her readers, a view that would find total agreement with Barthes.

Whilst many children's novels may contain overt ideological messages such as the promotion of racial tolerance other authors will adopt Walsh's approach. With regard to the array of authors who wrote school stories published in the 1940s and 1950s the overt and covert reflection of societal attitudes and contemporary culture helped to define the genre within the children's literature that was available at the time. The fact that authors are individualists who write the novel they want to write rather than one that will fit into a specific category is, however, one that is universally acknowledged.

1.4.1 Style

Individual writing styles

Each author will have their own distinctive writing style which transcends a wide variety of subject matter and while children do not often analyse it, they recognise the distinctions of style. Enid Blyton, for example, would experience strongly visual images when she was writing imaginative stories as she felt that "The story is enacted almost as if I had a private cinema screen there." (Meek, Warlow & Barton, 1977: 222) In a similar way the use of the third person narrative is based upon a need for greater flexibility in the novel's characterisations. Philip Pullman and Celia Rees are two authors whose use of the third person narrative allow for a more cinematic perspective of their characters. Firstly, Pullman elucidates on this device when he explains that "when you're telling in the first person you're limited to what that person knows, one sensibility. I like the third person voice because I like swooping in and drawing back, and giving a panoramic view – in the same way a film camera does. I like directing the story, and organising the *mise-en-scene* as one would direct a film." (Carter, 1999: 184) Celia Rees, too, places greater emphasis on the use of the third person narrative and justifies her choice accordingly: "With regards to characterisation and narrative point of view, I tend to have one central character and the other

ones grow around him or her, and they all have particular roles to play. The significance of each character does change as my novels progress...One of the advantages of writing in the third person...is that you can change the viewpoint to any number of people...By shifting the focus like that you're allowing the reader multiple viewpoints." (Carter, 1999: 203) As the child follows the story he is aware not only of the imagined characters and events evoked by the words on the page, but of the personal feelings, ideas, attitudes, association and judgments which these words simultaneously arouse in him.

Berlie Doherty, on the other hand, appreciates the need to create literary subjects with whom she can identify and this influences her preference to use the first person narrative: "I prefer writing in the first person, I think. It helps me to get inside a character, and sometimes I start to write it in the first person, because I can feel what they feel." (Carter, 1999: 150) This is a view that is shared by Jacqueline Wilson who finds "that mostly children seem to respond more readily to something written in the first person, because automatically you're on the same wavelength, and you become that child. I find it the easiest way for me to identify with my main character....Nowadays, even kids from arty, literary homes want more immediacy in a text. They want to get sucked in straight away." (Carter, 1999: 242)

Whichever style of writing is used to relay the story Geoffrey Trease was adamant in his belief that "A good children's book is one which uses language skilfully to entertain and to represent reality, to stimulate the imagination or to educate the emotions." (Trease, 1964: 9) In common with other children's writers Trease advocated that entertainment was essential, in which the "theme and vocabulary must be written within the grasp of the young." (Trease, 1964: 9) Trease, however, lambasted Enid Blyton's stories for their absurd and repetitive plots in addition to her "laboured facetiousness of style." (Trease, 1964: 111) An author's style of writing is a factor that could

be taken into account when considering the role of the author and his attitude to story writing. Graham Marks, for example, is a children's writer who emphasises dialogue in his character-led stories. To him "dialogue is really important to me because our lives are driven by conversation, it makes things happen in the real world." (Gamble & Yates, 2008: 93) In this respect the level of control that an author has over the reader's response is partly reflected in the way in which speech and thought are presented. On balance children's books tend to favour an active rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection.

1.5 Aspects of Children's Literature

Social Realism

One of the prime sources of advice and moral guidance for teenagers has been the teenage magazines with their advice columns or, perhaps more powerfully, the impact of the television soap opera. Authors writing for the teenage market have capitalised on this approach to life's problems by writing the literary version of the soap opera; open-ended story-telling, in familiar settings and with stereotyped roles, in which problems of family, sex, morality and relationships are taken seriously by all the characters. Talk is their main ingredient. As a form of entertainment the soap opera's shortcoming is that it is so shallow. It shares the penchant of prime-time dramas for glib transformations of character, swift and unequivocal justice and cheap moral certainties.

Judy Blume is one author who was one of the first to speak frankly about social issues such as sex and religion in her novel *Are you there God? It's me, Margaret* (1970) Writing for a young audience without ever seeming to preach or judge the protagonist, Margaret, asks God some serious questions during her prayers not only about religion but also her own particular

personal uncertainties that accompany a girl's approach to puberty. Blume re-creates what it is like to be on the verge of entering into new social and physical realities.

Contrasted to this scenario is Eleanor Estes' novel *The Hundred Dresses* (1944) which explores the theme of bullying. Bullying, indeed, is not a new trend as its contemporary school stories will testify. Wanda Petronski, the new girl in school, boasts of having one hundred dresses in her closet and sixty pairs of shoes. As she wears shabby clothes to school and speaks with a foreign accent she is teased mercilessly by her classmates with the result that she and her family move away where they will not be shunned because of their funny last name or their financial burdens. Estes' novel serves as a useful tale for sometimes thoughtless young girls who may not realize the power of words spoken in jealousy. Its sad but powerful message reinforces the fact that even words alone can cause hurt to others.

It would be foolish to imagine ever having a sterilized literature, free from all offensive racist and sexist references. The modern 'realistic' novelists have propagated an image of girls as narcissistic, shallow and manipulative where they are depicted in active roles. Works of fiction that acknowledge and delight in the variety of human experience are life-enhancing and give the reader food for thought.

1.6 Common Genres in Children's Literature

Historical fiction

The past is a common setting and historical or period fiction will often entail considerable research on the part of the author, whether the novel is pure fiction or semi-autobiographical. Writing a book is, almost literally, a journey, for it will be as much associated with places than with people. *The Midnight*

Folk (1927) written by John Masefield, is written from his memories of childhood, “from scenes and images that had been in my mind for a long time, and imaginings about places that had been important to me as a child, and are important to me still.” (Fisher, 1964: 16) The setting of Enid Blyton’s stories based on the adventures of her Five was certainly based on her love of the Dorset countryside. Her imagination was “fed and nurtured by external experiences...largely by what she had seen in Dorset.” (Norman, 2005: 7) The literary landscape of children’s fiction encompasses many areas of the British Isles although the subsequent discovery by the reader of that place’s true identity may come as a disappointment. ‘Whispering Island’, for example, in *Five have a mystery to solve* (1962), declared that “Yes, the island is real, and lies in the great harbour, still full of whispering trees.” (Norman, 2005: 93)

Geoffrey Trease, the master of children’s historical fiction, was passionate in his belief that “a good historical novel is a good novel, neither more nor less, whose story happens to be laid outside the limits of living memory.” (Fox, 1995: 52) The benefits of historical fiction are many and for the young reader the arousal of one’s interest and curiosity in history is always the main consideration. The narrative can often put historical events in the context of everyday settings as well as encourage empathy through characterisation. The historical setting allows the author to present models of behaviour and can illuminate ways in which different people solve problems and conflicts. Jill Paton Walsh, for example, is motivated by her interest in the impact of history on individual lives: “In telling children a story about something in the past, I aim...to write an account which mixes public and private perspectives so as to imitate memory.” (Walsh, 1994: 217) One of the pleasures of historical fiction is the facility to introduce children to the periods and places that are not formally studied in the curriculum or give an imaginative interpretation to such topics as the Romans, Tudors, Victorians and the two World Wars.

Fantasy

Historical fiction shares some common ground with fantasy: both genres are dependent on the creation of convincingly realized settings that are beyond the experience of the reader and may well appeal to readers in similar ways, offering an exotic experience or 'escape' to another world. Historical fantasy does not impose the same constraints regarding accuracy as straight historical fiction. In her fantasy novel *The Gifting* (1996) Sophie Masson dramatizes the importance of the past in relation both to the present and the future. She also examines the role of the past in determining historical and cultural truth, through an allegory of a civilization in decay. After the death of her father, Sulia leaves her third-century Roman city in search of the mother she never knew. Her longing to restore a lost ancestral bond is shared by fellow traveller, Rufus, who is looking for his absent father. Their journey across the sea into Alainan is a quest to remedy the sense of rootlessness and uncertainty generated by Sulia's and Rufus's disconnection from their past and lineage. In essence the story embodies Masson's belief that a study of the past is essential to a presentiment of the future and an appreciation of the present.

Another sub-genre to consider comprises the stories that are set in clearly identified historical periods but in imaginary lands. Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) is a classic example of this genre and has all the necessary magic ingredients: a dashing hero, royalty, a fair princess, a swashbuckling villain, and the original Ruritarian setting. Violet Needham's *Woods of Windri* (1944) describes a setting where the woods are kind and warm to Windri people but appear mysterious and threatening to strangers. It is a tale of the past, combining medieval intrigue, romance, murder, and mystery, populated by proud knights, dangerous outlaws and faithful friars.

Time-slip stories

Allied to the historical fantasy genre is the time-slip story where a contemporary child is transported back into the past, characters from the past reappear in the present, or both. In Alison Uttley's *A Traveller in Time* (1939) Penelope finds, quite by chance, that she can travel in time via the library at her great-aunt Tissie's farmhouse. In this instance she is caught up in the life of the Tudor farmhouse and slips between her ordinary nineteenth-century life and the high romance of Elizabethan times. Derbyshire was Uttley's native region so the setting is beautifully evoked with writing that typify her books of fictionalized reminiscences. Penelope Farmer's *Charlotte Sometimes* (1969) is more than just a time-slip fantasy – it is a story about identity. After her first night spent at her boarding school, Aviary Hall, Charlotte wakes to find that she has changed places with Clare, a girl from 1918, more than forty years earlier. Once Charlotte becomes stuck in 1918, she gradually begins to lose herself in Clare's identity, so that when, back in her own time, she learns of Clare's death, she cries as much for herself as for Clare. In each of these books historical events are filtered through the eyes of a contemporary protagonist. The time-slip novel allows the author to explore a period with hindsight and may contrast the values of a historical period with the present. Most frequently the time-slip novel begins in the present where the author establishes the credibility of the contemporary world. Although the tone of time-slip differs from the purely historical novel, the only fantastic device that is employed is the portal through which the characters travel back in time.

Science Fiction

From the seemingly mundane setting of school stories the realm of science fiction novels are based on settings that are as far removed from the school story as one can possibly get. As a genre it is generally future oriented, though it is not always set in the future and does not attempt to predict it, being more concerned with possibilities than certainties. An example of this

is Terry Pratchett's *Johnny and the Bomb* (1996) when Mrs. Tachyon's old shopping cart is found to work as a time machine. Johnny Maxwell, the book's protagonist, and his gang accidentally transport themselves back to the moment in 1941 when their hometown was hit by a bomb in World War II. Johnny sees his chance to warn the residents who were killed by the blast.

However, with any science-fiction, trying to change history can be difficult, and even if you succeed, it can cause problems in the future.

What the genre does show is the tension that exists between the hopes that society places in science and the fear of technological development.

Much early science fiction was concerned with exploration, including space travel and journeys to the deepest ocean. Jules Verne, one of the early pioneers of the genre, wrote *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* (1869) before submarines were perfected, and *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) before space travel was possible. With scientific researchers seriously investigating the possibilities of circular space time it is a genre whose storylines may not be entirely fanciful. Storylines involving characters encountering aliens throw up different challenges for the author as he has to make the world credible in the same way that the writer of fantasy has to realize an alternative setting. The reader must be able to believe humans can walk there. Alternatively, aliens make the journey across space and visit earth as envisaged by H.G. Wells in *The War of the Worlds* (1897) which was written after the close observation of Mars which led to speculation that there could be life on the red planet. Aliens disguised as humans is a recurring theme in children's fiction and Nicholas Fisk's *Grinny* (1973) is a perfect example. The elderly lady who turns up purporting to be Tim's, and his sister Beth's, Great-Aunt Emma plays mind tricks on the adults in the family. There is the eventual realisation that Grinny is actually a visitor from outer space, intent on a mission of total evil.

Utopia and Dystopia

A more modern genre is the dystopia which focuses on a fictional, socially engineered society usually presided over by a totalitarian regime. Although the reader may notice some resemblances to his world, they are usually set in an imagined future. The defining characteristic of the genre is that human beings are responsible for the dystopic state. Malorie Blackman's quartet, beginning with *Noughts and Crosses* (2001), uses the setting of a dystopia in which a white underclass is controlled by a black ruling elite which ultimately encourages reflection on contemporary society. Typical of this genre Blackman's quartet deals with the restriction of social mobility, that the state has total control of the economy, that there is general conformity and discouragement of dissension, though there may be informal or organized resistance. In this case the resistance is crudely carried out by the Liberation Militia.

In contrast to the dystopia setting the reader can also be entertained by an author's exploration of a utopian situation. Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* (1930) recreates a utopian existence in the Lake District in which the Walker children are allowed to camp on Wild Cat Island. The middle-class children, watched over by the motherly Susan, adhere broadly to a comfortingly firm social and moral code. The Walkers are portrayed as an enviable family and only Edith Nesbit's fantasy-adventures rivalled the intense pleasure offered by these sympathetic portraits of child life where the adults stood back at a distance to allow the children their freedom but guaranteed their safety.

Post-apocalypse

Post-apocalyptic fiction is set after a catastrophic change, perhaps climatic, or the aftermath of a nuclear holocaust. Robert Swindells was a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and his staunch opposition to the use of nuclear weapons inspired the postapocalyptic vision of *Brother in the*

Land (1984). Following a devastating nuclear attack Danny Lodge, the chief protagonist, is left to take on the parent role for his brother and teams up with Kim whose friendship is one of the few positive outcomes of the nuclear attack. As Danny grows up in the face of his changing universe the reader is shown that hope and friendship can overcome all.

As well as being a key to unlocking the past or the future, children's literature also offers readers possibilities of vicariously unfamiliar places. Books can be windows looking out to the world, showing how children grow up in different places, rich cultural heritages, and among the universality of human experience as well as highlighting sometimes difficult circumstances that children have to endure, perhaps of war, poverty or totalitarianism. From such a broad tapestry of subject matter the children's author has the opportunity to garner the relevant material as the basis for his next novel.

1.7 The School Story and its relationship within children's literature

As the focal genre of the thesis is the school story, which became an integral part of children's literature in the eighteenth century and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the school had already formed the background for several stories. A more detailed account of the emergence of the school story as a specific genre can be found on pages 111-112.

As an example of generic literature the school story relies on the regular re-use of the same elements, characters and situations. The earlier novels of the nineteenth century were predominantly centred around the boarding school and, as the boys' stories were the precursors of the genre, the themes of manliness and loyalty to the Empire cemented the ideas and beliefs of nineteenth century Britain.

Such themes have been the mainstay of scholarly research based on the school story (Naylor, 2003) whilst reference to social aspects has been made in various papers (Leeson,1976; Hollowell, 2014). More specific focusing on class and the school story has received only superficial acknowledgement. Skeggs (1997, 2004) has focused on gender issues relating to class and in this respect has highlighted the privileged social position of the upper class and how class has always been regarded as a form of cultural property. As my thesis embraces both boys' and girls' school stories it has given me the opportunity to explore the central issue of class and its effect on the life-chances of the under-privileged in British society between 1940 and 1960 on a wider scale than has hitherto been documented. Research into the school story has been historically limited although the authors already mentioned have inspired me into taking my line of enquiry in sympathy with a Marxist discourse view of language as one element of social life which is dialectically connected with others.

The success of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and, to a lesser extent, *Eric*, undoubtedly helped to establish the school story as a genre that was to experience undulating success that followed in the decades that followed the novels' publication in 1857 and 1858 respectively. Before reaching the height of its popularity in the latter part of the nineteenth century the attraction of the genre was the fictionalisation of the public school system, a world bounded by school walls wherein rules and hierarchy controlled the daily lives of the pupils. The setting provided "a backdrop for tales of adventure and humour" (Wright, 1982:59) whose appeal to the juvenile reader was raised to another level owing to the inspirational authorial talents of Talbot Baines Reed and the highly successful publication of *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* (1887), marking a shift from dogmatic religion to "the worship of good form." (Watson, 1992:xi) The fierce snob appeal of the genre set it apart from the adventure and mystery stories that comprised the rather limited contemporary children's literature. Excluded by class the school story reader

could only observe the cliquish world of the public school which extended to private and preparatory schools in later stories.

The essential quality of the nineteenth century school stories was the depiction of the English public schools as institutions which engaged in character building as befitting the future leaders of the nation. The stories thrived on exploring the dichotomy of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ characters in which the latter overcame the former so that the values of the established social order would prevail. It was a classic formula that would guarantee a fanatical following from the 1850s into the 1920s. (Watson, 1992:ix) The aftermath of World War One heralded a change in the nation’s culture, a hardening of attitudes to the *status quo* at a time when popular literature was imbued with a moral ambiguity.

As the genre progressed the school story allowed its authors to capitalise on the genre’s most important facets – the transition from childhood to maturity and the licence to experiment with the boundaries between fact and fiction. Richards, for example, exploited his Greyfriars school as a setting for an idealised fantasy life in which the boys were described more as ‘mini-adults’ (Wernham & Cadogan, 1976:176), whilst Buckeridge’s *Jennings* stories, on the other hand, emphasised a fictional world suffused with adventures and jokes. The school story of the twentieth century had moved from its initial stance of defending the public school system to become a metaphor for reality in which “the rich suffered the burden of their riches” (Wernham & Cadogan,1976:ii) and the barriers of class were being swept aside. Alongside this the school stories written by such authors as Tring, Hildick and Trease exhibited a realistic attitude to language and characterisation which helped quite considerably to re-establish the school story as a worthy competitor to the popular adventure stories of the 1940s and 1950s. Indeed Trease’s guiding motivation for writing novels for the adolescent reader was

“to communicate your own enthusiasm.” (Trease, 1974:7) His *Bannermere* series of school stories remains a testimony to such a motive.

As a sub-genre of children’s literature the school story played its part in leading the reader to an appreciation of its place in the general cultural literacy in which the reader could gain an insight into social structures in which they lived. This set it apart from other genres in that the school story provided a fictional outlet for contemporary social and educational issues having moved away from the religious and moral issues of the nineteenth century.

Essentially, the school story provided an integral piece of the reader’s own map of childhood which the authors acknowledged to be a diverse and subjective stage in the readers’ lives. The focus on action rather than on character development and the fact that the stories appealed equally to both sexes combined to make the school story a unique English phenomenon.

By the late 1940s “children’s literature was...ready for a great leap forward as, following the war, younger editors and librarians with fresher notions took over the places of their elders.” (Trease, 1974:161) The school story opened a window on other social behaviours as well as helping to provide a sense of national identity by providing an understanding of the past even though the characters and plots may have been fictional.

As the *Jennings* novels and the golden era of the girls’ stories helped to keep the school story buoyant as a popular genre of children’s fiction until after World War Two the stories penned by Trease and Hildick, set in state schools during the 1950s, combined more realistic action with which the middle-class reader could more easily identify.

M.E. Allan's *The School on North Barrule* (1952) provided a detailed and deadly accurate description of the environment in which her fictional school flourished. Allan's growing realisation in the early 1950s that the adolescent reader was looking beyond reading as a source of pleasure and escape and becoming more aware of "social consciousness" (Allan, 1982:33) was sufficient to motivate her to write a story, *Teachers' Rest*, based on three young teachers. The move towards a more realistic approach to the school story enabled the authors to exemplify a genre that was in its heyday that had extended from the 1920s into the 1950s. As children's literature grew to fruition because of quite specific developments in British society the school story genre has, in subsequent decades, responded to further changes in society and education. As Bradbury argues that "literature *is* a social product" (Bradbury, 1971:xi) I would extend his perspective of books as being "social institutions" (Bradbury, 1971:xiv) to include the school story as being a fairly accurate register of an English society undergoing social changes and, perhaps more importantly, about adolescence.

Children's literature, in general, has the power to extend the experiences of children and so it is important that they meet in their reading teachers who are real and rounded characters alongside the more Falstaffian creations of Frank Richards. Similarly, it is necessary that they encounter other children whose qualities and characters range from the shy and insecure to those who are self-sufficient and outgoing. Equally important is the fact that the school story has been instrumental in informing its readers that within the human race there is a diversity of talents and that inequality in life is a salutary lesson to be learned sooner or later. Rockwell's statement that "Fiction is not only a representation of social reality, but also paradoxically an important element in social change" (Rockwell, 1988:2) accurately summarises the part that the school story has played in children's literature in that, in its didactic role, it conveyed many of the values that parents and its authors hoped to teach to the next generation. In addition, the overall

success of the genre rested upon its ability to offer a range of characters which enabled almost every reader having someone with whom to identify. Although the tradition of the public schoolboy narrative had become outdated by 1945 it is the representation of friendship that became the hallmark of the girls' school story as epitomised in the novels of Angela Brazil.

Simon's evaluation of Brazil's fiction illustrates the power of the power of the girls' school story in its portrayal of contemporary attitudes in which "her girlish societies are insular communities in which the debates of the day are re-enacted: debates about female education, about careers, about militarism, about class, nation and power and, most importantly perhaps, about adolescence." (Briggs, *et al*, 2008:166) Simons' assessment reinforces the advantage of the girls' school story in that it provided a microcosm in which females were seen in positive roles and that they too could achieve both academically and socially. Alternatively, for girls to be allowed, in fictional terms, to escape from the straitjackets of what was expected of their respective 'class' contrasted with the real-life roles of the contemporary post-war females. Hollowell argues, however, that the "possibilities for girls and women are implicitly and explicitly restricted by factors such as class and race." (Hollowell, 2014:312) Respectability was a key characteristic of the notion of Englishness in pre-war and post-war Britain and Brent-Dyer's series of *Chalet* school stories is one source whereby the outward signs of either admiration or ridicule appeared depending on which 'class' the girl belonged.

The move away from fiction set in the public schools to state schools appealed to a different readership and reflected the genre's willingness to keep abreast with the changes in the organisation and management of schools. To its credit the development of the school story "shares a history contemporary with and parallel to the growth of the school system which has disseminated literacy" (Jenkinson, 1940:19) reflecting the novelists' increasing tendency to use the novel as a medium of social criticism.

The popularity of the school story genre as an example of formulaic literature could be judged by its reputation as embodying the values and attitudes that its audience wished to see affirmed throughout its development from the mid-nineteenth century. Overall the genre provided ample scope for human drama to be enacted by a ready-made cast of characters. The school story was a genre that encompassed various aspects of class: wealth, poverty, private and state education, aspiration and acceptance of one's social standing. Written by authors who came from a range of social backgrounds and professions, many with teaching experience in both sectors of the educational system, the school story differed from other genres in that it offered the adolescent reader an insight into tangible scenarios. Whilst authors such as Tring, Hildick and Croft would relate their fiction to the more mundane and restrictive lifestyles of the working-class pupils the fiction of Brazil, Brent-Dyer and Blyton allowed their characters to live up to the standards expected of the middle-class family. The portrayal of the respective lifestyles in which children could either accept a lower standard of living or strive to achieve an improved standard of living is central to Skeggs' argument that "Class was configured through the improvement discourse because in order to improve they had to differentiate themselves from those who did not or could not improve." (Skeggs, 1997:82) This remains a core feature of the school story that separates it from the other genres discussed earlier in the chapter. Teenagers attending working-class secondary schools such as Hildick's Cement Street Secondary Modern School are realistically delineated as having different expectations and stereotyped work futures than those attending prestigious selective schools such as Browne's Whitelands. This is apparent in the later analyses of the novels in Chapters 5 and 6.

The development of the school story genre will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter but it would be appropriate to express at this point

that the school story reflected an aspect of British society through fictional works whose quality was critically judged to be both good and bad.

1.8 The Role of the Children's Authors

Children's authors do not fall neatly into one category as there is a case for allowing such writers to fall into two separate camps which, according to Brian Alderson, are the 'book-centred' and the 'child-centred'. (Hunt, 1980: 18) The members of the former group feel that, logically, there is no such thing as a children's book. One cannot define a child and one cannot rely on authorial evidence either for establishing the intended audience or the intended meaning. On the other hand, the latter group might argue that there is no such thing as children's literature, unless one uses the term in a way unrelated to common usage. If 'literature' implies textual characteristics, such as fine writing and subtle forms, or complex interactions of character or theme, then it may not be acceptable or relevant to children.

Whichever camp the author belongs to the responsibility bestowed upon a children's author is such that the writer needs to be conscious of his audience and responsive to it. Malcolm Saville is one such author who agrees that "We who write for the men and women of tomorrow, have great responsibilities and must recognise them." (Trease, 1964: 10) Captain W.E. Johns also recognised the contribution that an author could make to a child's life when he believed that "Today...the training of the juvenile mind is important." (Trease, 1964: 80) In constructing a story specifically for the child reader the author may ask of the reader about what kind of experience he is invited to undergo. Edward Rosenheim Jr., for example, was curious about which factors would be taken into account regarding the most satisfying reading of a children's book. "Will this book call into play my child's imagination? Will it invite the exercise of genuine compassion or humour or even irony? Will it exploit his capacity for being curious? Will its characters

and events call for – and even strengthen – his understanding of human motives and circumstances, of causes and effects?" (Egoff, Stubbs & Ashley, 1969: 20) For the majority of children's authors the problem of engaging with his reader can only be met by a judicious blending of what is novel and unfamiliar with what is real and significant.

1.8.1 Writing to entertain

Whatever the period of history it would seem that for many children's writers the role appears to revolve around an obligation to 'entertain' as well as to touch upon some 'issues' to which the child or juvenile reader can relate.

As one follows the development of children's literature from the eighteenth century onwards it is quite apparent that the novel became a form of use of growing leisure. The story book served as a means of escape from an environment that could have been limiting and the novel afforded a way to entertainment as well as education.

In contrast to the didacticism that prompts some children's authors to write Phillippa Pearce describes the demand for values as insidious. On the subject of a writer's moral standards she explained in the 1966 copy of *Author* that "they will appear exactly or implicitly in his books...He should not need to bother about values; his job is imaginative writing." (Egoff, Stubbs & Ashley, 1969: 37) Similarly, Tucker argues that '...books should be about desirable experience rather than realistic experience.' (ed. Fox, 1976: 184)

Having a view of one's potential reader in mind is something that Gillian Cross addresses as she is writing: "In one sense I think about my reader as I'm writing. I have in the back of my mind a rather bored twelve- or thirteen-year old boy that I have to entertain – though I mainly test my work out by my own reaction." (Carter, 1999: 135) A similar intention is echoed by Berlie

Doherty when she regards the role of a child's writer as a "dual responsibility – you must entertain the child, it must be something they enjoy reading, but I think also because we're adult and we have had experience we need to kind of show a way through what seems to be a hopeless tangle at times." (Carter, 1999: 151) Christopher Milne's assessment of his father's book, 'When We Were Very Young', included the judgment that his father was writing to "entertain people living in the 1920s and those were the attitudes current at the time." (Leeson, 1976: 12)

Frank Richards, too, confessed that his [boys' author] business is to entertain his readers, make them happy as possible, give them a feeling of cheerful security". ('Horizon', 1940) Richards' *Greyfriars* of the 1940s utilised parody more openly for the comedy whilst from 1950 Anthony Buckeridge's *Jennings* made the comic element paramount. This was in stark contrast to the more sedate girls' stories, 'either the didactic as in Antonia Forest's books or the sentimentally escapist in the Chalet School.' (Leeson, 1976: 33) Trease was another author whose literary endeavours were expended to please his audience; 'to entertain them was essential,' (Meek, Warlow, Barton, 1977: 147) despite the fact that, like many authors, he possessed no magic formula for constantly winning over a juvenile public.

Sheila Egoff espouses the views of many children's authors in that she suggests that: "the aim of children's writing be delight not edification...and that in the worldwide realm of children's books, the literature be kept inside, the sociology and the pedagogy out." (Hunt, 1999: 25) Writers such as Enid Blyton, Arthur Ransome and W.E. Johns may not have been in total agreement with such sentiments, however. Whether the author intends to entertain his audience or himself through his writing is a question that is posed by K.M. Peyton who admits that she writes "to entertain, but whether I'm entertaining them or myself I've never quite decided. Sometimes I think it is more for them, sometimes for me." (Blishen [Ed.] 1975: 126)

1.8.2 Writing to instruct

Enid Blyton was a children's writer who went beyond the more superficial intention of 'entertaining' in advocating that she did "not write merely to entertain...My public do not possess matured minds...Therefore, I am also a teacher and a guide...as well as an entertainer and bringer of pleasure. A best-selling writer for children...wields an enormous influence." (Dixon, 1977:57) As a result her predominantly middle-class readership readily aligned themselves with 'the Five' and with the values that they represented. As far as their social values are concerned the characters are scarcely distinguished as separate beings as they neatly fit into their culturally conditioned 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles.

Blyton's insistence that she had a responsibility as an author to advocate sound morals in her stories was based on her assumption that children like morals if they are "artistically woven into the fabric of the story and not pinned on." (Trease,1964:116) However she was steadfast in her view that school stories were not to become theological debating grounds and that other religions besides Christianity should be taken into account.

W E Johns encapsulated both approaches, entertainment and didacticism, in his series of *Biggles* books . In a letter that he wrote to Geoffrey Trease his *raison d'etre* for writing for children was [First of all] "for the entertainment of my reader. That is, I give boys what they want...I teach at the same time...but the educational aspect must not be too obvious or they become suspicious of its intention." (Dixon, 1977: 105) The combination of the stereotypical characters and gung-ho storylines, however, were sufficient for T R Barnes to quip that "He [Biggles] represents the values of the prep-school applied to the sphere of adult action." (Dixon, 1977: 106)

Arthur Ransome believed that the author was responsible to himself alone and that “you do not write for children but for yourself, and if by good fortune children enjoy what you enjoy, why then, you are a writer of children’s books....no special credit to you, but simply thumping good luck.” (Egoff, Stubbs & Ashley, 1969: 37) As honest and forthright an opinion it may be a more erudite author such as C.S. Lewis was moved to confess a different motive for writing: “We must write for children out of those elements in our imagination which we share with children.” (Egoff, Stubbs & Ashley, 1969: 219) An author’s involvement with his reader in the way that Lewis entered into the world of his books is often required to return to his childhood consciously or unconsciously. In creating his imaginary world he must start with his own knowledge and work outwards. Both Tolkien and Lewis took their readers on a journey that embraced all the virtues that a child will look for in a book – energy, sincerity and imagination.

The critic who firmly believes that children’s literature is essentially written for didactic purposes would agree with Hollindale’s view that “since children’s literature is didactic it must by definition be a repository, in a literate society almost the quintessential source, of the values that parents and others hope to teach the next generation.” (Hollindale, 1988: 12) Children’s authors cannot conceal what their personal values are and even if their beliefs are passive they will be eventually revealed and communicated to the reader. It is the unexamined, passive values that are often widely shared values. Authors are individualists and ultimately they will tend to write the book they want to write rather than one that will fit neatly into a chosen category.

1.8.3 The issue of authorial intention

When considering the issue of authorial intention it is necessary to distinguish between novels that are written *for* children and novels *read* by children in the same way that one distinguishes novels written for adults and

novels read by adults. Serious writers of children's fiction may have a child or a range of children in mind when planning their novel and, as a result, will tailor the concepts and plot for that particular readership. The telling of a tale can be interpreted in a variety of ways according to the individual reader's experiences. Most children's authors will write for a certain age group as they move from one genre to another. They will have a specific audience in mind as they weave their characters into plots that are as sophisticated as the book will allow but still leave room enough for individual interpretation. What may seem to be a portrayal of real life for one child reader can be construed as fantasy for another depending upon one's own personal circumstances. In Marshall's opinion it is the 'perspective' that is at the heart of children's literature which focuses on the way in which the author presents the theme through the characters. (Marshall, 1988: 70)

A children's author is obviously aware of his audience when writing a book for, according to Leon Garfield, "when we've written a book we don't hang it up on our own walls for our own contemplation." (Garfield, 1970: 61) Although it may be partly true that not all children's authors write with particular children in mind they do write for an audience by which various aspects of childhood are explored. It is essential that every writer considers his audience for if he didn't he would soon be without one. Entering into an honest dialogue with his readers is also a prerequisite for an author and Garfield believes that "if he abides by this then his feelings, images and treatment of character will fall within the limit of his chosen character." (Garfield, 1970: 62) Parents and teachers alike would be in agreement that it is reasonable to expect the author to treat what he has chosen to write about in just proportion and complete honesty.

Whilst it is acknowledged that it is the author who is 'telling the story' the book is not necessarily written in his own voice or persona whilst, moreover, some critics would argue that the better authors see writing for children as a

“self-effacing exercise in shared enjoyment” (Eyre, 1971: 80). By having no personal identity or personal history the author remains a voice, a telling medium which strives for neutrality and transparency. Barry describes this kind of author as having an “authorial persona.” (Barry, 2002: 233) In contrast to this author Barry identifies another kind of author, the “overt” kind, (Barry, 2002: 233) who has a named character with a personal history. It is this kind that is probably the predominant kind of children’s writer where the reader is curious to find out if he shares anything in common with his favourite author. In the twentieth century the literary work has been adjudged by Sean Burke as being “beyond ethical recall.” (Waugh, 2006: 486) His suggestion centres on the notion that the novel is set apart from its creator and that the work is “to be judged in terms of its internal coherence rather than external motivations for its creation or its subsequent social, political or ethical effects.” (Waugh, 2006: 487) This is allied to Barthes’ view, as outlined in his essay ‘Death of the Author’, that the reader becomes the ‘producer’ rather than the ‘consumer’ of the text. The text is purely textual and the author is nowhere to be seen. In this respect the author is protected from the effects of the text and the text is protected from the effects of its author’s life.

Part of the author’s role, particularly with regard to children’s fiction, is to bear in mind the imaginative interpretation that the reader may bring to the novel. Laurence Sterne, for example, felt that the author would do well to believe “that the truest respect which you can pay to the reader’s understanding, is to halve the matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.” (Saur, 1980: 15) An author’s appreciation of the reader’s imaginative response was to be echoed in later years by C.S. Lewis who viewed his readership as responding with a mixture of ‘discipline and play’ where discipline involves “the attentive and obedient imagination” and play “the fertile imagination which can build on the bare facts.” (Saur, 1980: 15) The power of the child reader’s imaginative response

is further acknowledged by Percy Lubbock who envisages the child reading the novel and imagining that “the landscape opens out and surrounds us, and we proceed to create what is in effect a novel within a novel which the author wrote.” (Saur, 1980: 15)

Bleich’s declaration that “literature is a reflection of people, and in it we can see human problems and concerns that we are going through ourselves” (Bleich, 1978: 7) is an accurate reflection of the intention that most children’s writers wish to present in their writing. This notion is modified by Kuhn as being akin to the ‘subjective paradigm’ (Bleich, 1978: 10) wherein a paradigm is seen as model which alludes to the “cognitive state of mind of those systematically observing something in human experience.” (Bleich, 1978: 10) All perception takes place through such a paradigm resulting in the reader gaining knowledge through synthesised interpretations.

Stanley Fish also argues that the author writes with no determinate meanings. In the absence of determinate meanings the stability of the text becomes an illusion and interpretation becomes a “matter of individual and private construing none of which is subject to challenge or correction,” (Fish, 1980: 317) In his research relating to the response situation Harding proposed that the reader’s response can be likened to the gossip situation where “the playwright, the novelist, the song-writer and the film-producing team are all doing the same thing as the gossip...Each invites his audience to agree that the experience he portrays is possible and interesting, and that his attitude to it, implicit in his portrayal, is fitting.” (Bleich, 1978: 107) This was modified in later years when Harding expressed his belief that “the mode of response made by the reader of a novel can be regarded as an extension of the mode of response made by an onlooker at actual events.” (Bleich, 1978: 107)

In his essay relating to the Romantic theory of authorship, Andrew Bennett (Bennett, 2005) states that Barthes' opposition to the 'expressive theory' of authorship is based on Barthes' view that it [expressivity] "may be said to account for everything that is commonly or conventionally taken to be implied by the idea of the 'author' of a literary text and in fact for much that is commonly or conventionally understood by the word 'literature' itself." (Waugh, 2006: 48) The fact that a literary work reflects the author's feelings and intentions is anathema to Barthes and the literary text is viewed as a way of representing in language an idea of work that derives from the author's consciousness. For Barthes and other structuralists and post-structuralists, the text is reduced to no more than "an index on the consciousness of the authorial subject." (Waugh, 2006: 50) Imposing an author-figure on the text results in the limitation of its meaning and restricting or closing down the reader's interpretation. Authorial intention has become of paramount importance to the writer and the reading of the text is then regarded as an analysis of what the author meant to say. In a statement that would perhaps alarm the majority of children's writers Friedrich Schlegel asserts that "every honest author writes for nobody or everybody: the author who writes for some particular group does not deserve to be read." (Schlegel in Waugh, 2006: 51)

There are indeed instances when one may question the integrity of an author who is simply paying lip service to fictional realism. Eyre feels that "those [writers] who write glibly for children, without themselves possessing any genuine sense of values knowing truly what they mean (or without themselves possessing any genuine sense of values), confusing moral issues, and twisting both character and incident to contrive solutions that are temporarily acceptable but leave no lasting satisfaction in their readers' minds – such writers are doing children a grave disservice." (Eyre, 1971: 151) The author's aim, however, does not necessarily create a children's book. Children will read across whatever boundaries are set by those

individuals involved in children's literature including publishers, teachers, librarians and parents.

1.9 Topical Issues

The issues that are explored in children's literature cover a considerably wide spectrum and can be summarised by the two interrelated terms of subject and theme. In Joan Lingard's book *Across the Barricades* (1972) two teenagers live out their lives against the backdrop of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. This is the subject of the story, whereas the theme, or central unifying idea, might be described as conflict that explores the impact of political and social events on ordinary lives. The reader is given an insight into the enormously complex issues their relationship generates. The themes of children's literature can be challenging and complex.

1.9.1 Subjects

An elementary definition of the subject of a fictional text is 'what the story is about' in a more concrete sense than the theme. The subject of a book may be deceptively simple and yet have a profound theme, as in the case of Morris Gleitzman's *Once* (2005) which can be enjoyed by nine-year old children but still provides food for thought for more juvenile readers who have some background knowledge of the Holocaust. Susan Hill's *I'm the King of the Castle* (1970) tells of a mother and her son who move into a large country house where the boy's mother is employed as the housekeeper. The boy's eventual suicide is brought on by his reluctance to accept his mother's intention of marrying the house's owner. This is the subject of the story, whereas the theme, or central unifying idea, might be described as cruelty and the power of evil.

Children's texts that deal with specific issues also help individuals to come to terms with profound emotional upheavals in their lives. These may include themes such as death and bereavement, serious illness, adoption, bullying, disability, divorce and separation and gender issues. For the juvenile reader issues subjects such as sex and teen pregnancy or personal health and confidence can be explored through fiction as well as non-fiction texts.

1.9.2 Themes

All of the elements of a novel ought to support its theme, that is, the main idea or an underlying meaning that may be stated directly or indirectly. In school stories there is usually a dominant theme which may, for example, revolve around bullying, jealousy or petty theft. In most cases it is often the manner in which the theme is presented that implies the readership of a novel. Bearing in mind that children live in a world that is arguably solipsistic the theme can help the reader to articulate a developing sense of self in relation to others. This is particularly pertinent with regard to the school story which has provided children over the decades with access to their own culture and social history.

The dilemma that faces publishers of children's novels is the suitability of themes depending on what may be considered morally suitable. There may be certain themes that are deemed to be taboo in order to protect children from those aspects of adult life which are thought to be corrupting, sexual or unpleasant. Children's literature essentially comprises stories that present an escape from reality and which "reflect and confirm their perceptions of their environment." (Cullingford, 1998:23) Cullingford argues that In this respect the theme plays a far more important role than the credibility.

Explicit themes are more often directly revealed in the text, as in Ted Hughes' *The Iron Man* (1968) which draws on common themes in myths and

traditional tales. It is an exciting and profound story about the power for good and evil that coexists in all of us. Other themes are implicit in the story as in Jacqueline Wilson's *The Bed and Breakfast Star* (1994) where Elsa's chatty narration and silly jokes do not detract from the more sober issues affecting a flawed and struggling family. Books that deal with a similar theme but more frankly include Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (1988) and Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* (1989) where the brutality of war is clearly and poignantly portrayed.

Rather like the story plots that can be identified in children's literature some commonly occurring themes in children's fiction are:

- Facing and overcoming fear (Marchetta, [1992], Cooper, [1973)], Browne, [1977])
- Good versus evil (Philip Pullman,[1995], Rowling, [2000], Hughes, [1968])
- Coping with bereavement (Tim Bowler,[1997], Rosen, [1974], Hill, [1992])
- Conflict of nature and urbanization (Peet, [2003], Thompson, [2005],)
- The power of the imagination (Wynne-Jones, [1993], Thompson, [1994])
- Abandonment (Beale, [1998], Voigt, [1981])
- Secrets (Townsend, [1982], St John, [1977])
- The nature of heroism (Orr, [1996], Johnson, [1955])
- Development of moral responsibility (Doherty, [1991], Fine, [1989])
- Interpersonal relationships (Lingard, [1972], Cooper, [1998])
  (Gamble & Yates, 2008: 98-99)

A selection of novels that exemplify each of the themes which illustrate the rich diversity of children's literature can be found in Appendix B.

This list is not exhaustive and it is not unusual for a book to contain more than one theme, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* dealing with growth from dependence to independence and self and selflessness being a case in point. Furthermore, recognition and identification of theme is largely contingent upon personal experience and response. As soon as the reader works on a book he begins to construct a text which may or may not match either what the author thinks that he presented or the text constructed by any other reader.

Jacqueline Wilson is well-known for dealing with domestic issues and by reaching out to those children who have experienced a range of domestic problems. She feels that she has helped her readers through her fictional characters when she says that "some children have told me that they enjoy my books because I deal with the situations that they're facing in their lives." (Carter, 1999: 243) From the 1970s onwards a writer with integrity was more concerned with problems that were intellectual, emotional, moral and social rather than the practical ones that confronted his counterpart in the 1930s or 1940s such as the commercial and practical difficulties of paper shortage during the war years. It became a period when the author became more aware of the influence of librarians, teachers and reviewers and the subject matter of his writing was taken more seriously because of the effect it may have on the future development, intellectually and morally, of his readers.

The shift in emphasis from practical issues to those of a more emotional nature will be explored later in the chapter.

The 1970s heralded a time when critics, teachers and lecturers were preaching the need for an ever-increasing social realism and authors, like Wilson, responded to the challenge. Authors who write novels about the backgrounds and lives of children from the poorest kind of home often base their stories on close observation rather than experience. In this respect they

are regarded as outside-looking-in books whilst avoiding the snobbishness of Garnett's *Family from One End Street*. To overcome this Eyre believes that "the best we can hope for is that intelligent writers, who look hard at what they see and try genuinely to understand, will do their honest best to observe and interpret." (Eyre, 1971: 155) The origin of Garnett's novel was attributed to her experience of witnessing the poverty in London during the Depression when she was an art student. She took to walking around the back streets and to drawing the ill-clothed and underfed children she saw. Whilst accurate observation and possessing a social conscience made her first an artist Garnett's portrayal of a working-class family as a writer was littered with a catalogue of stereotyped characters.

The Family from One End Street was originally a social document, a criticism of the conditions which produced poverty, but somewhere in the writing, criticism was lost and humour took a leading role. Whilst authors such as John Rowe Townsend and Noel Streatfield may fill their stories with real people whose characters are accurately observed and portrayed we are still left with the situation that children may never be able to learn how the children from impoverished backgrounds really feel until one of them becomes an author in their own right.

In the light of critical opinion the author may even be moved to sharpen his own attitudes by pointing out new evils to be explored and new prejudices to be exploited. Authors such as Morris Gleitzman (*Once*), Ann Holm (*I am David*), Joan Lingard (*Across the Barricades*) and Malorie Blackman (*Noughts and Crosses*) make their readers experience the suffering caused by prejudice, hate, meanness and stupidity.

To understand how a reader responds to literature that is specifically written for a particular age group it is necessary to define what is meant by the 'child reader'.

2.1 The Child Reader

An assumption was made in Paragraph 1.2 that the parameters of the child readership for this study would encompass readers between the ages of 9 and 13. One of the main differences between an adult reader and a child reader is that the adult's response and the child's cannot be the same; the former has a memory of childhood and categories for delineating experience and judging it. The latter has childhood itself, passing every day, and memory is one of the things that a reading experience creates. Due to the limitations of a child's experiences of life there is also a greater limit on the material a child can understand as well as on the intellectual, emotional and experiential variability that he can be expected to bring towards it. This is a perspective that a children's writer considers when she is writing for her audience.

To Musgrave the term 'reader' can be viewed from three perspectives:

- The one who constructs the text
- The constructor of the text for himself
- The reader seen by the writer when writing the book (Musgrave, 1985: 6)

It has been acknowledged that the reading process for a child revolves around emotions and between the ages of 6 and 12 "the child becomes aware of thought, of dreams and of his emotions and feelings, all in the form of narrative." (Meek, 1977: 9) The reader moves between the world of action and that of his thoughts and feelings. The loss of literary innocence comes when the reader stands outside and looks in on the storyteller's world from the adult's viewpoint.

However, perception of a text as fictitious or factual is to some extent dependent on the reader's prior knowledge and attitude. A literary text might

be considered one that is ambiguous or open to interpretation and will therefore be interpreted in different ways by different readers. The whole question of reader response will be addressed at a later point but it is interesting to note the diversity of argument that this particular issue generates. Reader response theories, such as that expounded by Fish (1980:317) have been influential in the development of pedagogical approaches for teaching reading and literature whereby it is generally acknowledged that meaning is created when readers interact with texts.

Imaginative readers will 'rewrite' books to suit their own taste, creating their own internal reality. The imaginative landscape is furnished from the vicarious experience of bringing readers, through the pages of a book, into contact with experiences they will never encounter in real life. The characters who inhabit these fictitious landscapes will impact on the reader in a variety of ways where they will bring to mind their own images based on an author's description of character. The effect of both important and trivial literature upon individual readers is always going to be a very personal matter.

2.2 Identification

The concept of identification, for example, where the reader feels the need to recognise himself in the text and is ideologically constructed by his identification with the character, is a notion that underpins some writers' attitudes to their work. In this respect Adir Cohen is of the opinion that: "Writers have become aware that, for the child, a book is a source of satisfaction that derives from identification and participation, and an expansion of his own experience...The process of reading, identification, participation and relating brings the reader into the reality of the book in dynamic fashion." (Hunt, 1999: 25) For a child to find himself in a book it is not necessary for him to recognise his social milieu in the setting, but to find his interior fiction as part of the writer's intention.

Quite often the family provides a frequent source of conflict in contemporary children's books and a child reader can often relate to the characters through personal experience. Children's novels have the effect of putting human faces and specific situations on such abstract concepts as courage, justice and responsibility. On this note C.S. Lewis expounded that one function of stories is "to present what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life exclude." (Lewis, C.S. 1982: 10) Stories can create an emotional attachment to goodness and by reading a purely fictitious story about people we can never meet we come to care deeply about what happens to them. Children's literature also provides good role models, both in fiction and non-fiction. This is symptomatic of what might be termed 'character education' whereby the reading of 'virtue stories' can also teach children "traditional moral values." (Narvaez, 2002:156) There has been widespread research in America, particularly, where books promote the cultivation of personal moral development.

Through identification with a character's emotions and how that character copes with those emotions, a child takes the first steps in developing empathy and compassion. Tucker (1980) concedes that after the age of seven the differences between the adult and children's reading reactions gradually become less distinct. Tucker's experience as a development psychologist has convinced him of the difficulty in reaching, for him, conclusive criteria for trying to assess how well or not a children's author has fulfilled their task for any particular child audience in any particular book. At certain ages, for example, only certain intellectual strategies will be available to one as a child, and one is therefore limited to books which do not go too far beyond the reaches of such strategies. He qualifies this further by pointing out that:

"Although the actual nature of a positive individual response to literature is always going to be deeply personal I think we can, where children are concerned, suggest certain literary approaches within which such a response

is most or least likely to take place, always remembering of course that child psychology here as elsewhere is always more concerned with trends and probabilities than with facts and certainties." (Tucker, 1980: 6)

The American psychologist, David Elkind, has identified one particular response by readers in the 9 – 13 age group who may be satisfied with a happy conclusion where the hero is successful at gaining his prize. This can be a satisfying turn of events for children who in reality are less likely to get their own way when they are in competition with bigger, more powerful rivals. Elkind refers to this response as "cognitive conceit". (Tucker, 1980: 9) This also applies to those readers who relish the fantasy of parents being expunged in the first few pages as the protagonists proceed to solve mysteries and tame wild environments on their own.

3.1 Reader Response Theory

The question of reader stance is a recurring theme within the body of research on reader response. Although several prominent theories of reader response delve into various perspectives, they share one common property: each describes reader response in terms of two opposed domains with particular responses falling somewhere on a continuum between them. Louise Rosenblatt's model (1978) determined the two extremes of her continuum based on the reader's focus of attention. Efferent reading, the participant role, and interpersonal context all share public and less personal tendencies and lean toward convergence of thought. Aesthetic reading, the spectator role, and intrapersonal context share personal and divergent qualities. In examining the range of approaches the theorist will have considered what determines the focus or purpose for reading. Is it the text, the reader, the context, or the interaction of all three?

Whilst fictional texts constitute an interpretation of the world that young readers often need, each reader will bring to the text his own prior

experience and individuality. Children will look for the familiar, for the signs of meaning as they construct their interpretation of the world. At the heart of reading is the control of the reader, the personal response, the search for individual meanings. The multitude of personal responses will vary from reader to reader according to both the levels of his understanding and experience.

3.1.2 Interacting with the text

Wolfgang Iser's Reader Response Theory (Iser, 1978) explores the Reader – Interaction – Text relationship whereby a great deal of the reader becomes involved with the text and interacts with it. Expectations are formed in the reader's mind about what might happen next or who it might involve. Such expectations are constantly being modified in the light of the reader's engagement with the text. The most powerful aspect of the interaction between the reader and text is the way that many readers form images of scenes or characters as a way of orientating themselves vis-a-vis the text. Such images are often clear and precise and ultimately become our fixed idea of what a character looks like.

Studies of response cannot disregard what the reader brings to the book. In *The Act of Reading* (1978) Iser refers to Arnold Bennett's conviction that "You can't put the whole of a character into a book." (Iser, 1978: 180) The implication of this statement is that there is a discrepancy between a person's life and the somewhat limited form in which that life may be represented. Roman Ingarden elaborates on this notion by acknowledging that there needs to be a series of "schematized aspects" (Iser, 1978: 180) by which the character is represented. As the story develops so each incomplete aspect of a character is supplemented by the next until finally the complete representation of the character emerges. In Ingarden's view the reader will make selective decisions about the character in such a way as to

be able to relate to him. By this process “we are concerned not with the illusion of reality but with the patterns of external reality from which the selection of elements has been made.” (Iser, 1978: 180)

Reference has already been made to Iser’s view of the ‘implied reader’ who performs a twin role as a ‘textual structure’ and a ‘structured act’. (Iser, 1978: 35) The literary text exists primarily as a means of communication whilst the process of reading is basically a dynamic process of self-correction by which various units of meaning gather together as the reader progresses through the text. While the textual structure represents a perspective view of the world put together by the author the literary text is best described as a system of perspectives designed to transmit the individuality of the author’s vision. The characters of a novel together form one of the main perspectives and this is enjoined by the narrator, plot and the fictitious reader to form the meaning of the text. For Iser “fiction is a means of telling us something about reality” (Iser, 1978: 53) and the dynamic interaction between text and reader creates the impression that the reader is involved in something that is ‘real’. The constant feeding back of reactions as he obtains new information represents a continual process of realization. Accordingly, “if a literary text represents a reaction to the world the reaction must be to the world incorporated in the text.” (Iser, 1978: 98) The meaning of the literary text depends largely on the relationship to what the printed text says but it requires the creative imagination of the reader to put it all together. For Eyre the imaginative response of the reader is all important as “it takes some imagination to be interested in other people’s characters and the motives behind their actions.” (Eyre, 1971: 78) The literary text delivers different information to different readers – each in accordance with the capacity of his comprehension and, indeed, life’s comprehension.

Although the reader must be an active participant in the assembly of meaning by realising the structure inherent in the text one must bear in mind

that he stands outside the text. The reader's position must be manipulated by the text if his viewpoint is to be properly guided. It is a viewpoint that can't be determined exclusively by the individual reader's personal history of experience although this history cannot be totally ignored either. The actual constitution of meaning occurs when something 'happens' to the reader and Iser argues that every text we read relates itself to a different aspect of our person. As each text has a different theme so they link up with a different aspect of our experience. The text is seen as a series of shifting viewpoints and as each viewpoint is restricted in itself further perspectives are necessary. As these are constantly interweaving it is quite impossible for the reader to embrace all the perspectives at once.

Children's literature often provides examples of literary texts that bring into focus the whole sphere of human relationships. The fact that literature consists of a wide variety of realistic scenarios may be the reason why many people regard 'fiction' as the opposite of 'reality' when it is, in fact, not the opposite, but the complement. For Iser fictional texts do not copy something that is already in existence but, instead, constitute their own objects in which the experience of the text is brought about by the personal interaction of the reader with the text.

Where Hirsch (1967) believed that the author's verbal meaning is objectively determinable, Fish argues that due to the instability of the text and the unavailability of determinate meanings there is no ultimate normative way of construing what anyone says or writes. Yet in Fish's opinion, "it is only if there is a shared basis of agreement at once guiding interpretation and providing a mechanism for deciding between interpretations that a total and debilitating relativism can be avoided." (Fish, 1980: 317) When the child reader interprets the actions of a character and formulates a personal view of that character the interpretation is naturally motivated. Individual variation amongst other readers is caused by the unique influences of abilities,

predispositions and experiential background of each reader making the reactions a subjective response. The fantasy writer, George Macdonald, wrote in the same year that *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) was published that:

"The fairy tale cannot help having some meaning...everyone, however, who feels the story will read its meaning after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning into it, another will read another." (Leeson, 1976: 10 – 11)

Various research projects (Eggert et al., 1975) (Dixon, 1977) (Hirsch, 1967) dealing exclusively with reader response have led researchers to conclude that interpretation is predicated on response and thereby place more emphasis on the implications of the individuality of each interpretation. This special emphasis that is placed on the action of the reader was touched upon by Louise Rosenblatt who tried to reach a new understanding of response and whose findings led her to assert that:

"Fundamentally, the process of understanding a work implies a recreation of it, an attempt to grasp completely the structured sensations and concepts through which the author seeks to convey the quality of his sense of life. Each must make a new synthesis of these elements with his own nature, but it is essential that he evoke those components of experience to which the text actually refers." (Bleich, 1978: 108)

Rosenblatt's basic outlook includes the idea of communication between the author and the reader although she considers this only a subordinate function of the reader's subjective action, in effect, the 'knower's' synthesis of the 'known'. This process, regarded by Rosenblatt as the 'literary transaction', describes the action of the reader as she brings "to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be duplicated

combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text." (Bleich, 1978: 109) The reading experience is indeed deemed to be an involved transaction with the text where the reader's creation of a story or a poem out of a text has to be an "active, self-ordering and self-corrective process." (Protherough, 1983: 29) The child reader is not only aware of the imagined characters and events evoked by the words on the page but of the feelings, ideas attitudes and associations which those words and events simultaneously arouse in them.

Rosenblatt's earlier research in reading response theory in 1978 led her to conclude that when approaching reading from an efferent stance, the reader attends to what will remain after the reading event, usually information or actions to be carried out. When approaching reading from an aesthetic stance, the reader's attention is focused on living through the event, "the associations, feelings, attitudes and ideas that these words and their referents arouse within him." (Rosenblatt, 1978:25) Reader stance, or purpose, is a matter of degree, however, and the purpose may change as the reading progresses. This aligns quite closely to Iser's view that the subjectivist element of reading comes at a later stage of comprehension where the aesthetic effect results in a restructuring of experience.

On evaluating his research into reader responses Harding concluded that in the child reader's mind there is an "evaluation of the fictional character's experience in relation to his own" and that "all of this is happening within a contextual awareness that he is dealing with a representation of experience." (Saur,1980: 16) A similar conclusion with regards to the child reader's interpretation is reached by Purves whereby the reader "attempts to find meaning in the story by relating it to his concept of the real world." (Saur, 1980: 18) As a study that relates directly to the subjective experience of reading,Purves deduced that, within the reader's mind, there are four general sets of relationships:

- The direct interacting of the reader with the story. This represents the reader's involvement with the plot.
- The reader's more detached viewing of the story and its author as objects distinct from himself. This signifies the reader's perception of the 'otherness' of the story world.
- The reader's attempts to find meaning in the story by relating it to his concept of the real world. This is the reader's 'interpretation' of the text.
- The reader's judging of the story. This is his evaluation of the text. (Purves, 1968)

Based on this research there is convincing evidence that the experience of reading fiction is a combination of what the text offers and what the reader brings to the text. Smith, for example, purports that what is going on in the child's head as he reads a story is dependent more upon what the reader brings upon what the text offers when he says that "the information that passes from the brain to the eye is more important than the information that passes from the eye to the brain." (Saur,1980: 18) Eggert, however, argues that we know very little about such problems as identification with literary characters and the role of imagination in the reading process.

For Benton a child's response to the text, the 'reading state', has four attributes. The first one is 'active' in its nature where the reader makes meaning from signs. The second is a 'creative' stage when the reader becomes an interpreter of the text and builds a mental stage upon which the reader fills it with people, scenes and events that the text offers him. This is complemented by the fact that the reader is 'unique' in that each reading is a unique experience. As the reader finds different things in the story on a second reading reveals that the nature of his imaginative participation has changed. The fourth attribute that the reader brings to his reading is one of 'co-operation.' In common with Purves' research Benton, too, describes the experience of reading fiction as being a compound of what the text offers and what the reader brings. Here the reader combines his own imagination with that of the writer.

If each reader's reading is unique, according to Iser, then "[An interpreter's] object should... be not to explain a work, but to reveal the various conditions that bring about its possible effects...an interpreter can no longer claim to teach the reader the meaning of the text for without a subjective contribution and a context there is no such thing." (Martin & Leather, 1994: 10) Iser's basic assumption is that every piece of fiction is incomplete in that the 'telling gaps' (Saur, 1980: 39) are consciously or unconsciously arranged by an author which enable the reader to contribute to the reading process. The didactic texts, where little is left to the reader's imagination contrasts starkly to the creative texts that are characterised by telling gaps which enables the reader to become, in effect, a kind of co-author.

Nevertheless, the actual 'measuring' of a reader's response is left open to some degree of doubt as Crago argues that "we can never know exactly an individual experience of a story or a picture book. Observed response to literature is not equivalent to internal experience of literature." (Martin & Leather, 1994: 13) The level at which one is able to predict or understand literary responses is questionable as William Blake succinctly reminds us when he says that:

> "Both read the Bible day and night
> But thou reads't black where I read it white."

(From William Blake's 'The Everlasting Gospel' 1818)

As part of the reader response debate one could contend that the reader makes connections between what is read, his life and oneself. On a subjective level we learn from what we read and take that learning to the next text and as the reader's experiences increase so Barthes assumes that "this is what reading is: rewriting the text of the work within the text of our lives." (Martin & Leather, 1994: 33) Other theorists, however, would maintain

that readers must not only rely on past experiences but must also be aware of textual conventions. In this respect “a text...could be made to mean many different things by different readers. Literary texts are more likely to give rise to variable interpretation than non-literary texts...However, this does not mean that interpretation is therefore completely subjective and impressionistic because...interpretations are produced within a set of rules or conventions.” (Martin & Leather, 1994: 40) In Iser’s opinion the most powerful aspect of the interaction between the reader and the text is the way in which he forms images of scenes or characters as a way of orienting himself vis-a-vis the text.

Taking into account Iser’s theory that fiction tells us something about reality, contemporary realistic fiction provides opportunities for children to identify with characters who have similar interests and problems. The prime concern is not the inherent meaning of the text but, more, its effect which, to Iser, is the function of literature.

4.1 Gadamer and Hermeneutics

As the decisive figure in the development of twentieth century hermeneutics Gadamer developed a distinctive and thoroughly dialogical approach to reader response theory. In contrast with the traditional hermeneutic account, Gadamer’s view of understanding is one that rejects the idea of understanding as achieved through gaining access to some inner realm of subjective meaning. As Gadamer perceived that understanding is an ongoing process, rather than something that is ever completed, he also rejects the notion that there is any final determinancy to understanding. In the final analysis Gadamer asserted that when the understanding of a text is accomplished by the reader “its meaning cannot be attributed to either writer or reader.” (Warnke, 1987: 48) This belief is linked to both Hirsch’s and Gadamer’s perception of a text’s ‘shareability’ whereby the reader shares

more than just a knowledge of what an author's intentions were, it is related more to the reader sharing "the text's understanding of its subject-matter," (Warnke, 1987: 47) as well as understanding the author's linguistic symbols.

In his essay 'Hermeneutics and authorial intention' (1987) Gadamer argues that the 'truth' of a work of art must be relevant to the person whose life it could affect. In the same way a literary work will only affect the reader on the understanding that "no text and no book speaks if it does not speak the language that reaches the other person." (Gadamer, 1975: 358) Gadamer's treatise regarding the subject of 'truth' explores his view that truth is an aspect of human experience which deserves special emphasis

Alfred Schutz's theory (1970) relating to interpretation of the text centres on the view that the reader is involved with at any one particular moment is what constitutes for him the 'theme'. (Iser, 1978: 97) In agreement with Gadamer's hermeneutic theory of interpretation Schutz believed that the 'theme' stood before the 'horizon' of the other perspective segment in which he had previously been situated. Gadamer clarifies this by stating that "the horizon is that which includes and embraces everything that is visible from one point." (Iser, 1978: 97) In this respect the 'horizon' comprises all those segments which had supplied the themes of previous phases of reading. As an author's perspective view of the world, the text cannot possibly claim to fully represent the reader's view and it is the structure of theme and horizon that constitutes the vital link between the text and reader.

As hermeneutics essentially concerns itself with interpreting a text and with how that interpretation may validate itself, the question needs to be asked how genuine understanding can overcome the obstacles of both distance in historical time and often distance in culture between the text and its reader. The stumbling block concerning this issue is the contradiction between the scientific and philosophical norms of what 'understanding' and 'knowledge'

ought to mean. For Gadamer the reader is drawn into the text because he can understand it through some sort of common ‘horizon’. By homing in on elements that he can identify with he is then in a better position to reach a fuller understanding. This is not always a straightforward process, however, as the text may not always be reducible to the reader’s ‘horizon’ and he must therefore be prepared to approach the text from other situations or times. So what, then, are the strengths of hermeneutics? Timothy Clark sums up his views of hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation using four succinct points:

i) The nature of interpretation is relativistic.

ii) It offers the impossibility of objectivity.

iii) There is the impossibility of overcoming the distance between the time of the text and the time of the reader.

iv) It is not seen as the fixed product of determined formal or syntactical rules.

Overall, “understanding is fundamentally more a practice than a theory,” (Waugh, 2006: 67) and, as Gadamer perceives it, reading is inherently democratic and dialogic. When one says that someone ‘understands’ a text are we meaning interpreting text in terms of its author’s life or its social or historical context or measuring the text against contemporary knowledge? The way in which fictional characters and the world in which they live impact on the subjectivity of the reader indeed reinforces the ‘god-like power’ of the author over the text’s meanings in the way that Bennett envisages. (Bennett,2005:15)

Authorial intention in children’s literature can range from proselytising through the actions and words of the novel’s characters to allowing the author to perpetrate recognised mischief and misbehaviour vicariously and

with impunity as in the case of Richmal Compton's series of *Just William* novels. The concept of 'character education' (O'Sullivan, 2002: 7) is one that relies on core values such as honesty, tolerance, respect and responsibility being reinforced and understood by the reader with the intention that the child reader will become an adult who will behave in a virtuous way. In this respect children's novels can serve as a powerful medium to teach character education.

5.1 Moral and social issues as part of the reader response

Robert Protherough's research (1984) led him to examine pupils' personal reactions to the 'rightness' of the story and an increasing concern with links between the story and personal experience. With respect to characters in a book, the children seemed to imagine that the novels could be different from the way they were if the characters were different. As the reader follows the story he is aware not only of the imagined characters and events evoked by the words on the page, but of the personal feelings, ideas, attitudes, association and judgments which those words simultaneously arouse in him.

Anecdotal references include responses such as "I don't like the story much, because I don't like the way the boy was bullied." And "I didn't like the way that the boy told the truth and got into trouble because of it." (Protherough, 1984: 9) In general older children are able to express the reasons for their judgment on different aspects of a novel more fully and in a more responsible way than younger ones, where the difference between liking and judging becomes clearer.

The sense of attachment to a text is made possible when the reader imports into it elements from their first-hand experience. This subjective, personal response is the product of the interaction of the literary work with the reader's own particular representation of experience. The resulting feeling is the

product of an internal, personal and slow process of assimilation and accommodation. In this way the personal response begins with the stimulus provided by the text and with our conventions for interpreting it. Whilst he may be firmly outside the action it is likely that he will become emotionally involved in what happens and ultimately express feelings of empathy or a more distanced awareness of what 'ought' to be happening.

When making judgments on novels child readers tend to describe their personal feelings about what happens when they read them. Protherough's research with younger secondary school pupils reinforced his view that "their instinctive emotional response to the experience dominates any other kind of verdict on the books *as* books; liking and evaluating are identical. Books are remembered as significant primarily because of the emotional effect which they had." (Protherough, 1983: 4) Furthermore, two contrasting models of the fiction reading process put forward by Protherough are 'Objective' and 'Subjective'. (Protherough, 1983: 26) The former model suggests the text has a meaning to be simply conveyed to passive recipients while the latter relies upon the reader's interpretations and judgments as being neither right nor wrong so that the immediate reactions are of equal validity. In this respect the readers' responses <u>are</u> the text: there is no literary text beyond the meanings created by the reader's interpretations and, on this basis, subjective criticism centres on the belief that all literary knowledge is subjective.

Contrary to most theorists, however, Jacqueline Rose (1984) believes that children's books, through a combination of characterisations and assumptions of value position, "construct children, both as characters and readers, as without sexuality, innocent and denied politics, either a politics between themselves or within wider society" (Hunt, 1999: 48). Compared to other critics her views may be regarded as naive, construing the child reader as someone who is untainted by culture. Central to the reading of every

literary work is the interaction between its structure and the recipient. Iser's theory of aesthetic response is based on a basic tenet that each literary work comprises two poles, the artistic and the aesthetic, where the former relates to the author's text and the latter to the realisation accomplished by the reader. According to such a reader-oriented theory the subjectivist element of reading comes at a later stage of comprehension at a point when the aesthetic effect results in a restructuring of experience.

If one defines reading as a subjective experience, a private dialogue between one writer and one reader, the children's author has a certain responsibility to his audience with regards to personal views on social and moral issues. Nina Bawden is one author who believes that children are interested in moral questions. (Blishen,1975:63) and who respects the fact that children are individuals whereby one is never like another. In K.M. Peyton's view, however, the efficacy of moralising can be called into question as she believes that the author who thinks that he "can 'con' his audience into what might be called correct attitudes must be doomed to failure. The writer's own attitudes probably show through, but whether these are uplifting or depressing depends on who is the judge. I feel that the only possible limitation in writing in this sphere is the necessity to write within the framework of the reader's understanding..." (Blishen, 1975: 126-7) It may be tempting to assume that literature reflects society and that the values and expectations in society are inferred from the attitudes of fictional characters but personification, the process by which norms and values are made visible by being represented as fictional characters, is a vital component of the reader's response to literature. The actions of the characters validate the norms and, in doing so, make them acceptable.

Popular fiction, by definition, reflects popular attitudes and can act as a form of social control which mirrors widely held popular views. The new juvenile literature that emerged from the post-war years was both to entertain and to

instruct, to inculcate approved value systems and acceptable gender images, in particular gentlemanliness for the boys and domesticity for the girls. (see Chapters 5 & 6) Against this background of potential stereotyping popular fiction continued to provide images of society constructed of selected elements and aspects of real life organised into a coherent pattern governed by a set of underlying presuppositions.

6.1 Literary Ideology

Children's literature can often be used as a conduit for an author's system of values and beliefs, in other words, a personal ideology. It could indeed be argued that all novels embody a set of values, whether intentionally or not and that a novel may be influential in ways that its author did not anticipate or intend. An ideology is inseparable from language and one must respect that the divergences of language within a national culture point to divisions and fragmentations in its shared ideology. What the author brings to his book is largely governed by the world in which he lives and, as a rule, children's authors are transmitters not of themselves uniquely, but of the worlds and ideologies they share. The social snobbery and cliquishness that is often associated with the school story genre, for example, could, if taken to extremes, create an atmosphere of nationalist hysteria and class hatred. An author's responsibility to his readers amounts to a social duty to handle certain themes and attitudes with the greatest circumspection.

Children's literature often deals with moral and social issues that enable the reader to experience what life was really like at another time or place. Stories allow children to debate and reflect on what is right within all the complexities of a specific content. They provide models for how to choose right behaviour as well as demonstrating the consequences of whatever behaviour is chosen. Morality as a central theme in a children's novel is often paramount with the battle between good and evil played out by the main child character

who is representative of the good forces. Frequently, as shown in the final showdown in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the conflict is resolved with a battle. The child is a vanquisher of evil and consequently demonstrates that the meek can overcome the powerful provided right is on their side, thus reinforcing the Judaeo-Christian mythology. For most child readers a story must have a point and the resolution of a moral dilemma can often be played out when the 'bad' character gets reprimanded and punished and the 'good' attractive people emerge from the situation safe and sound.

An author's approach to children's writing has been categorised by James Steele Smith (1980) into two distinct basic attitudes, the writers who are 'book-centred' and those writers who are 'child-centred'. For those writers who fall into the former category there is a shared belief that there is no such thing as a 'children's book' as it is too difficult to define a child. It is impossible to "rely on authorial evidence for establishing the intended audience, the intended meaning or the intended quality." (Hunt, 1980: 18) Such a sentiment is endorsed by one of the most famous children's authors, Lewis Carroll, when he said: "Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them; so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer meant." (Hunt, 1980: 18) On the other hand, the child-centred author will argue that there is no such thing as children's literature for if 'literature' implies textual characteristics or complex interactions of character it will not be relevant to children.

To Hollindale (1988) the priority in the world of children's literature should not be to promote ideology, but to understand it. He believes that ideology is present in a children's book operating on three different levels.

The 'explicit' level is essentially overt, when the writer wants to recommend and promote his social, moral and political beliefs to the reader. This is the

most conspicuous element in the ideology of children's books where its presence is both conscious and deliberate. It is often proselytising. Henry Treece, for example, is quite open with regards to his role as a children's author when he writes that "In my stories I try to tell the children that life may be difficult and unpredictable...but that the joy is in the doing, the effort, and that self-pity has no place. And at the end and the gods willing, the good man who holds to the permanent virtues of truthfulness, loyalty and a certain sort of stoic acceptance of both life's pains and pleasures, will be the fulfilled man." (Hollindale, 1988: 11)

The second level, the 'implicit' level, is more passive in nature. It reflects the writer's unexamined assumptions where very often these values are taken for granted, particularly if they are widely shared values. Hollindale qualifies this particular element by asserting that "since children's literature is didactic it must by definition be a repository, in a literate society almost the quintessential source, of the values that parents and others hope to teach to the next generation." (Hollindale, 1988: 12) These are the unexamined and widely shared values that the writer takes for granted and which the children will also take for granted. The views of the world are put into the characters' mouths or otherwise incorporated into the narrative.

The third level revolves around the 'dominant culture' where all writers operate within a culture and at a given point in time and place, and as such their books are products of the world in which they live. Ideology is not something which is transferred to children as if they were empty receptacles. It is something which they already possess, having drawn it from a mass of experiences far more powerful than literature. These experiences can be accounted for in Althusser's essay, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1970) which advanced the author's argument that regimes or states are able to maintain control by reproducing subjects who believe that their position within the social structure is a natural one.

Ideology, or the background ideas that we possess about the way in which the world must function and of how we function within it is, in Althusser's view, understood to be always present. These ideologies are reinforced by institutions or 'Ideological State Apparatuses' such as family, schools and church which provide the developing subject with categories in which he can recognise himself. An ideology is inseparable from language and one must respect that the divergences of language within a national culture point to divisions and fragmentations in its shared ideology.

It is within the author's power to recommend an improved world which reflects not the reality but what he hopes it might be. Whilst it is possible for an imaginative novel to be true to life Leon Garfield, for one, has struggled with writing in the context of social realism in a complex and troubled society. He admits that he has found "the social aspects of contemporary life too fleeting to grasp imaginatively before they are legislated out of existence. And anyway, I don't think the novel is as suited to coping with them as is the television documentary or the newspaper. It was once, but not now. In the old days it was fine to take up arms in a social cause." (Eyre, 1971: 99) Some critics would argue that to see literature as a straightforward response to social conditions is too deterministic and reductive. For the majority, literary creation is a process in which the writer often struggles with the world he sets out to depict, so that while some works undoubtedly do reflect their society in a very passive way, others articulate its contradictions, questions its values, or even argue against them. It is ultimately the reader who is left to make his own judgment as to whether the author has struck the right note.

Townsend (1965) reflects on the Victorian school story as exemplifying an ideological campaign and cites Hughes and Kipling as two typical practitioners. In Hughes' case *Tom Brown's Schooldays* provided an opportunity for him to "get the chance of preaching" whilst Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* Began life as "some tracts or parables on the education of the young."

(Townsend, 1965: 91) In a nutshell Kipling's novel represented the Empire abroad and the public school network which provided its cadre force, at home. In essence, the schoolboy was the public schoolboy.

7.1 Concluding Remarks

Within the very wide spectrum that is classified as children's literature authors have constantly striven to bring popular literature to a very mixed audience. The variety of texts to which the twentieth century child has been exposed has offered itself to a multitude of interpretations by different readers. Each individual reader has brought to bear his own imaginative interpretation regardless of whether or not the author has intended to entertain or edify their intended reader. Even the task of agreeing on what constitutes children's literature has not been a straightforward one. Critics and authors alike will agree that it can encompass almost anything although Leon Garfield suggests that children's literature is "concerned more with the possible than with the probable." (Garfield, 1970: 60) Undoubtedly every child will form their own image based on an author's description of character.

The delineation of character is of considerable importance in a child's appreciation of a story. It involves the engagement of the reader's emotions and characters are often judged in relation to the values that it represents. Identifying with a character, where possible, is an added bonus, whilst the identification of good role models is central to the understanding and enjoyment of literature. Not all authors, however, will portray their protagonists in such a positive light as many a school story will testify.

The author's intentions in writing a novel for children can vary from the basic wish to entertain his reader or to 'educate' him through fictional characters and storyline. Authors like Jacqueline Wilson look upon their books as a support for those children who have experienced domestic hardships and

who find some solace in identifying with the characters or plot, or both. Whilst some books will serve as a conduit for an author's personal ideology some theorists will argue that any interpretation of the text is in the hands of the reader and the author has abdicated all responsibility with regards to any authorial intent.

The foregoing discussion on theories with regard to reading response will have built a platform on which to judge the nature of the school story genre as well as consider how the earlier authors such as Hughes and Reed used the school story as a vehicle to promulgate their individual attitudes towards moral education in Victorian society. The points relating to authorial intention will also help to form a basis of understanding on how the literary evaluation of the school novel alters over the decades to reflect the shifts in social attitudes.

In the next chapter I will be exploring the development of the school story genre from its inception in the 17th century up until 1940. The chapter will place the school story in the context of popular children's fiction and elicit the main elements of the genre which made it unique.

As a genre the school story was not unique to Britain but the old school story is certainly peculiar to England, based on the institution of the fee-paying boarding school. The construction of such stories relied heavily on conformity, whereby a whole realm of scenarios was enacted within the constricted boundaries of the boarding school. It was a genre that was socially constructed and socially sustained although, from a literary perspective, it was a comparatively minor genre. If a genre can be defined as a "coherent response to contemporary social circumstances or to the circumstances of the recent past" (Musgrave, 1985: 4) one could argue that the original school story reflected the life of education and schooling in mid-

Victorian England, particularly that which related to middle-class boys. For its early readers the genre provided a topic of considerable interest.

Chapter 3

The Development of the School Story in Britain before 1940

"Let's have good, profitable adventure stories for boys, and adventure stories for boys means public school stories, so let's give them that."
(Lord Camrose, Gathorne-Hardy; 1977)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the development of the school story genre from its origins in the 17th century leading up to 1940 after which its progression will be analysed alongside examples of school stories in Chapters 5 and 6. As works of fiction the school story has reflected societal changes since the genre's inception including, notably, developments in the education system. As education forms the keystone of the stories, whether it is treated in a jocular fashion or otherwise, it nonetheless serves as a backcloth for the story's plot. With regard to the school story depicting social and educational inequalities, indirectly or otherwise, it is pertinent at this point to allude to Stone's argument that "The structure of education in a society is determined by seven factors: social stratification, job opportunities, religion, theories of social control, demographic and family patterns, economic organization and resources, and finally political theory and institutions." (Stone, 1969: 70) Each of these elements can be identified at some point in the school story genre although this study will focus mainly on the first factor, social stratification.

In charting the development of the school story up to 1940 using a thematic rather than just a straightforward chronological approach it is intended to describe the key elements of the genre to chart its popularity as well as its

decline. As a barometer of social changes and educational provision the genre would seem to underpin Stone's belief that "social stratification determines the general framework, [of educational provision] since each of the educational levels is normally designed to meet the needs of a different social group; each serves, and indeed until very recently has been designed to serve – the purpose of reinforcing class distinctions and reducing social mobility." (Stone, 1969: 71) When one considers the range of educational and social backgrounds of the various school story authors who are alluded to in this thesis it will become apparent why Stone's referral to the relationship between education and social structure is so relevant. Elitism in England's educational system was becoming apparent due to its alliance with the nation's social stratification. This would provide a rich seam on which to base the school story genre.

Whilst the school story as a genre is not unique to Britain the school story, based on the fee-paying boarding school, is peculiar to this country. Such schools provided an escape from parental authority, whether the child wished it or not, and replaced it with the companionship of the dormitory which provided a fascinating, and sometimes enchanting, insight into boarding school life. Although the school story was extremely popular among the public school boys the later introduction of the Boys' Own Paper in 1879, comprising almost entirely school stories, reached an extensive lower class readership and such adventures were read largely by an audience who had not the slightest chance of experiencing the reality.

What distinguishes the school as a setting from most others is that it provides, almost exclusively, a self-contained world. The Victorian images of comfortable nostalgia and old-fashioned chauvinism provided a winning formula for many years to come. School is where children first encounter a social reality that is broader at the time than anything the home can offer.

This particular genre flourished at a time when the boarding school was seen as the natural fictional scenario for such tales.

For the purpose of defining the terms ‘private’, ‘public’ and ‘boarding’ it is necessary to refer to the schools’ historical development. Private schools, the catch-all category, encompasses the range of schools which did not come under State control after the 1870 Act when the government of the day began to establish State-owned and maintained schools to fill the gaps in voluntary and charitable provision. Nowadays these schools would be officially designated as independent schools. By the early 19th century the large and successful fee-paying grammar schools, except where specifically for day pupils, were almost entirely boarding. Even the smaller schools had a proportion of boarders.

The ‘public’ schools applies, historically, to the major schools, often referred to as the Great Schools, that included Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Charterhouse, Winchester, Westminster and Shrewsbury among its ranks. These were essentially boarding schools which also accepted day pupils. Beyond the thirty or forty top schools is a great body of minor public schools, ancient local foundations and private schools of one kind and another, most of them more or less in the mould of the big public schools, and of varying academic and social status. More precisely, “by the end of the century [19th], if one accepts a rather strict definition of public school, approximately half were from old foundations (‘great’ and old grammar), and half newly formed. The second guideline to grasp is that the years of maximum intensity were from 1840 to 1870, activity remained high until 1900, and then the entire movement virtually stopped.” (Gathorne-Hadley, 1977: 94)

The values, ideals and traditions of the major schools, as well as their educational methods, spread throughout the entire private school system and eventually became a focus for the boys’ school fiction writer. Seen

initially in chronological order to appreciate the evolution of the school story the genre was given a tremendous new lease on life by the publication of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in 1857. The early novels evoked the aura and mystery of prestigious boys' schools.

Initially the school story genre concerned itself with the issues of public school life seen from the boys' perspective. The world of school stories was essentially an idealised one whose root was anchored firmly in the past. Although this chapter addresses the boys' school story in the main the issue of the school story seen from the girls' perspective will be dealt with at the appropriate point later in the chapter.

1.2 The emergence of the school story

The earliest example of the genre can be traced back to the 17th Century with the publication of Dr. Joseph Webbe's *Pueriles Confabulatiunculae*, or Children's Talk (1627). Webbe was an English grammarian, physician and astrologer whose views on language teaching were based on minimal instruction in grammar. (Carpenter & Prichard,1984: 470) This was followed in the next century by Sarah Fielding's *The Governess* (1749) and *Goody Two Shoes* (1765). Dorothy Kilner's novel, *Village School* (1795), introduced the format of setting the story specifically in a school and was a perfect illustration of a moral tale of the period. Maria Edgeworth's novel, *The Barring Out* (1796), provided an uncommon example of a late eighteenth century account of public school life. (Carpenter & Prichard, 1984: 470)

The early decades of the 19th Century saw the emergence of a different type of school story that included a more realistic insight into the day to day life of a boarding school. In her follow-up to *Village School* Dorothy Kilner describes the antics and pranks of schoolboys in *First Going To School* (1804), an ingredient that would become a central feature in the many school

stories to come later in the century. The didactic narratives set in boarding establishments became an accepted form of narrative which also created an environment for moral dilemmas to be played out, where the exhortation of decency and honesty could be exhibited on the school playing field as well as in the classroom.

1.3 Victorian Morality

A code that was fundamental to the upper middle-class Victorian family was a deference to authority and a sense of duty to one's family and one's social group. For the sons of the gentry the sense of duty to one's friends was further extended to include the school itself.

On a national, as well as international, scale the government of the day was duty bound to establish and defend legitimate authority both at home and in the Empire. During the mid-Victorian period a distinctive English world view was being formed when the expansion of the middle classes transformed the face of society. In Harold Perkins' view, "Between 1780 and 1850 the English ceased to be one of the most aggressive, brutal, rowdy, outspoken, riotous, cruel and bloodthirsty nations in the world and became one of the most inhibited, polite, orderly, tenderminded, prudish and hypocritical." (Richards, 1988: 10) This image provided a fertile background from which the Evangelicals made inroads on every level and aspect of society resulting in the 'pacification and purification of society.' (Richards, 1988: 10) Indeed the evangelical school story that was written by such authors as Hughes and Farrar became the antithesis of the 'penny dreadfuls' which emerged in the 1860s. Such moral didacticism was central to the genre.

The separate components of a novel such as theme, characters and settings need to be established and popularised. Whilst Hughes and Farrar could not constitute a genre in themselves it was necessary to whet the readers'

appetites through weekly and monthly journals and blend the elements into a genre. Between the publication of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *Eric* and the start of the *Boy's Own Paper* and *Girl's Own Paper* in the 1880s a small group of writers filled the gap. Writers such as W.H.G. Kingston, H.C. Adams, T.S. Millington, A.R. Hope and Ethel C. Kenyon continued where Hughes and Farrar had left off by setting their stories predominantly in small private schools and where the intended readership would be middle-class boys. The stories were usually openly didactic and emphasising values involving difficult moral and theological issues that were raised within an Evangelical framework. There was less stress on the overt signs of Christianity where the stories portrayed a personality that could be termed as a public school type.

1.4 The Christian element of the school story

The place of religion in the Victorian family is central to the success of the school story. The economic and political threats to Britain that occurred between the publication of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and the 1880s came about in conjunction with changes in the family system. The Religious Tract Society, for example, "acted as a capitalist entrepreneur, though itself in pursuit of the morally based policy of providing worthwhile literature for adults." (Musgrave, 1985: 166) In these social circumstances Baines Reed's stories firmed up the genre.

The Christian evangelism that permeated Hughes' writing was partly due to the influence of cooperative societies and trade unions that were in existence in the mid-nineteenth century. (Haworth, 1973: 28) The publication of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* certainly helped to bring the educational reforms of Dr Arnold to a broader audience.

Whereby *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was a direct result of Thomas Arnold's headship at Rugby, Hughes' novel had as much a social agenda attached to the story as its literary intention of describing the effects of schooldays on a boy's character. In the book Hughes "tapped the spirit of the Broad Church movement which fitted the patriotism associated with the growing Empire and the need for social reform in a rapidly industrialising society." (Musgrave, 1985: 82) From Dr. Arnold's perspective as a Christian Socialist he wanted 'Tom Brown' to be "a real novel for boys – not didactic – written in a right spirit, but distinctly aimed at being amusing." (Townsend, 1965: 56) The book was written at a time when British society and the building of the Empire required team spirit more than individual virtue as public schools had a reputation for brutality before Dr. Arnold's pioneering spirit became more widespread. Indeed Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1867) attacked the directions in which culture in an industrialising Britain was developing and advocated a firm secular moral basis for our culture. Insomuch as it was regarded as a school story *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was later to be regarded as "the most important document in Christian Socialist literature...a social document depicting a polity in miniature as a model for national society." (Richards, 1988: 52) The public school, an institution that was unique to England, was proving to be central to the consolidation of the new upper stratum with the coming together of businessmen and the bureaucratic and expanding professional classes as well as the older gentry and aristocracy. Hughes had indeed set a trend of highlighting three themes which would become to be associated with classic boys' school stories, that of "the socialisation of the schoolboy, the inculcation of manliness and religious awakening." (ed. Butts, 1992 : 3)

The moral tone of the early school stories was developed through scenarios that centred on the theme of power, especially that given to the prefects who exemplified the prefectorial system of the boarding school. Arnold would argue that such powers invested in the older boys helped to form character.

Ideally, the prefects embodied the power that enabled them to set an example and the right tone for others to follow. Similar to that of the authority that is invested in senior non-commissioned officers the prefects provided the symbols of an authority that is centred on the headmaster and through him on the housemaster. The one feature of school life that seemed not to change was the role of the teacher who “will remain the hard-hearted, short-tempered, vitriolic tongued, but sportsmanlike at heart men that they were yesterday and today.” (Cullingford, 1998: 39) The teachers in the school story plots might not occupy a central position but, nonetheless, schools were regarded as being extremely autocratic. In the process of developing one’s character the school’s function, as portrayed in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays,* was to facilitate the learning and imbibing of moral virtues rather than delivering and assessing a set curriculum.

The result of such an autocratic system was the creation of a clear set of differentials between boys of the same age in the same house. In the knowledge that all who pass through the ranks of the school will have the chance to show power over others the ‘fagging’ system was regarded as a slow and painful initiation ceremony which would be endured by everyone. What is clear is that only bullies would abuse a system in which some boys have power over others. The school story would be written from the point of view of younger children who would often get the better of the bully. In this way an immediate structure of the story was given to the books by virtue of the act of fagging and how the ‘fag’ got the better of the abusive prefect is a common plot.

Through his novel, *Eric,* (Farrar: 1858), Dean Farrar aimed to emphasise the way in which Christianity should govern morality amongst the middle classes although the book was read by a small percentage of working-class boys. By building on the Evangelical spirit that was still strong amongst the rising industrial middle class and aspiring new professionals Farrar’s novel fitted in

within a changing capitalist economy where religion was still a central social institution. His later novel, *St. Winifred's, or, the World of School* (1862), elicited a livelier account of public school life. Both Hughes and Farrar were cognisant of the importance of family and the consideration of education outside the family. Book publishers, too, were more than aware of the crucial social and political role of the patriarchal family. (Musgrave, 1985: 45) The boys' school story genre is not unlike any other genre in that it has "a temporary and socially negotiated reality". (Musgrave, 1985: 256) In this sense the genre, generally, creates a social factor that both influences and is swayed by the interaction between writers, publishers and readers.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century boys' school stories were stressing the importance of certain moral rather than intellectual qualities as being the main aim of elite secondary schooling and, as a literary genre, this move had immense implications for the state secondary schools as well as for the secondary schools throughout the British Empire. Indeed the moral code in boys' stories of the nineteenth century, alongside the character of the heroes, changed as the twentieth century loomed. During the nineteenth century the code was for the upper middle class to be prepared for retaining power in all walks of life but this picture was somewhat altered in the interwar years where the advent of the scholarship pupils created a more meritocratic scenario in which neither overt Christianity nor patriotism were key focal points. (Musgrave, 1985: 245) Imperialism had become the dominant ideology by the late nineteenth century as public schools became nurseries of imperial administrators and officers. It was an ideology of which Kipling would become a staunch supporter.

Where Hughes had previously displayed his sense of patriotism in a matter-of-fact manner it would now be dealt with in a manner that was faintly jingoistic. The threat of a French invasion by Napoleon 111 in 1859 was instrumental in raising the imperial spirit of Britain and it was in this social

situation that Talbot Baines Reed was to move during the next decade although jingoism was not to be found in his schoolboy stories.

1.5 The School Story 'Formula'

There was a gap of almost 30 years since Farrar's *Eric* when Reed deployed the basic elements of the genre and through the serialisation of *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* he defined readers' expectations of what a school story should be through his dedication to the provision of wholesome boyish literature. The reading matter that was available to the working-class in the form of 'Penny Dreadfuls' contrasted sharply with the publication of *Eric* that was intended primarily for the middle-class reader. *The Boy's Own Paper*, moreover, had a readership that transcended all the social classes and even *'Tom Brown's Schooldays'* had been recommended for inclusion in the libraries of state elementary schools. Five other school books followed on from Reed's success with *Fifth Form at St. Dominic's*, published as a novel in 1887, and their subsequent republishing that extended into the 1930s was a clear indication of their popularity with boys.

In his school books Reed developed the characteristics of boys' school stories as a minor literary genre at a time when public schools were regarded as much more structured places compared to small private schools. Leeson sums up Reed's elements of the genre more specifically as "new boy problems, rival gangs, hero worship, stolen exam papers, gambling debts, unfair suspicions, bad redeemed by good, friend/enemy saved from drowning" (Leeson, 1992: 4) More formally, Musgrave categorises the essentials of the school story at the time in four parts.

Firstly, the plot of the school story is invariably seen from a boy's point of view and Reed's novels were praised for their accuracy by those who had attended the public schools. In the school story setting, however, there would

be little danger of the plot line straying far owing to their strictly-controlled and limited boundaries. The plot would invariably explore the virtues of “chivalry, decency, honour, sportsmanship and loyalty.” (Kirkpatrick, 2000: 153) Although the novels would contain fictional plots these would be based on factual evidence about the customs and practices of public schools.

The second aspect of the school story, as perceived by Musgrave, is that the school is seen as an organisation. The hierarchical nature of the boarding school which extended from the Head to the fags is one that was seen as a model on which boys could develop their leadership skills, the need to obey and then give orders at a later time. The boarding school represented a small closed community with sharply set bounds and firmly fixed rules, a compact world that an author of Reed’s standing would find fairly easy to manipulate.

Thirdly, the character of the hero, or heroes, develops during the story. Characterisation makes certain writers live on long after the boarding school formula seems to be exhausted and Reed’s characters in *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s* remain still real and alive in narrative and in dialogue. The school story told the reader something about the boy mind and the experience of boyhood through the interaction of the various characters. With regard to making the literature realistic for children Reed allowed his characters to be full participants in the life of their community. Although Reed himself attended a London Day school he knew of public school life at second hand and his writing appealed equally to those boys who attended boarding school as well as to the wider public excluded from what George Orwell referred to as “that mystic world of quadrangles and house colours.” (Trease, 1964: 108)

Fourthly, Musgrave included the morally didactic element in the story. In Reed’s case there was a well-articulated set of values that was explicitly and implicitly involved in his writing based on his own strong Christian values.

According to Richards most authors of school stories writing in the 1860s and 70s “were high on moral didacticism and low on patriotism and athleticism.” (Richards, 1988: 14)

Whilst Hughes and Farrar wrote for people like them Reed took the elements from their stories and developed the framework within which he wrote the five successors to *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic’s* (1881–2). Regarded by Richards as the writer who “created the formula that many writers were to follow” (Richards,1988: 103) Reed gave the school story popularity among the many readers who would never experience boarding school. In Frank Eyre’s opinion, Reed brought the school story “to a perfection of unreality from which there was no escape possible.” (Eyre, 1952: 51) Following on from Hughes’ philosophy of the idealised Christian gentleman Reed also believed that fighting for its own sake is not a good thing but fighting for a cause was essential. Those who were to follow Reed were able to experiment as much or as little within the framework as he pleased although many of these writers were dismissed by Isabel Quigly as “hack and humdrum.” (Carpenter & Prichard, 1984: 470) By the end of Reed’s relatively short but full life, he, more than any other writer, was responsible for establishing the school story as a genre popular enough to rival the adventure story in sales and readership.

The middle-class’ desire to preserve their class position for their children through the educational system buffeted against the growing power of labour and more vocal criticism of social inequalities. A knock-on effect of the demographic tendencies of the late Victorian years was the increase of the potential market for books for both children and young people more broadly. The flood of school stories in the 1880s, particularly, reflected the development of new publishing technology. In sociological terms, however, the school story genre aided the hegemonic process in Britain by reinforcing the fact that the public school system had become the shared formative

experience of most members of the English elite by the end of Victoria's reign.

In the latter part of the Victorian era the middle class provided the potential market for a public school education which was rising in numbers as well as in importance. Entrepeneurs like E.J. Brett who had initiated the 'Penny Dreadfuls', first introduced in 1876, were able to make a profit whilst the upsurge of patriotism, often jingoistic in expression, was to be found in G.A. Henty's adventure stories which were written from the 1880s up until 1902, many of which centred around incidents in British Imperial history. Whilst this aspect of British history was largely ignored in the boys' school stories the presence of xenophobia could be discerned in T.S. Millington's *'Some of our Fellows'* where Germans and Jews were targets for snide comments.

1.6 The portrayal of reality in the public school story

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the emergence of adult school stories was eagerly taken up by a generation that had been brought up on *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and its successors in the 1860s and 1870s. At this point Rudyard Kipling was hailed as Reed's natural successor with the publication of *Stalky & Co.* in 1899. Although school stories by this time were aimed at an unsophisticated audience who bought *Gem* and *Magnet*, the boys' and girls' weekly papers produced by Harmsworth's Amalgamated Press, Kipling's novel set the pattern for school stories that appeared in such publications. The novel, however, did not meet with universal approval as Wells referred to its bullying protagonists as "mucky little sadists." (Trease, 1964: 108) Where Hughes had earlier expressed his sense of patriotism through a deep attachment to rural England Kipling's patriotism was the ideal of serving one's country to maintain the Empire. His book served as an illustration of a personal belief that Britain and its Empire was in danger due to the moral inefficiency of its leaders. *Stalky & Co.* was written in a

deliberately tough and unsentimental manner and although it is regarded by some critics as the only entirely successful 'serious' school story in existence (Carpenter & Prichard, 1984: 470) it has also been derided by Eyre who believed that "though Kipling infused a new spirit with *Stalky & Co.,* the result was simply to tag some new plot ideas on to the old pattern." (Townsend, 1965: 62) The novel is undoubtedly one of the first school stories to portray some of the darker aspects of boarding school life. The school is, however, presented as a living community where the masters and boys "have the same right to personality." (Fisher, 1964: 171) Other cultural influences helped to define the impact that Kipling's novel had on its readership:

"The new self-consciousness with regard to the meaning and importance of public schools, the revival of serious adult concern over adolescence as a result of the development of modern psychology, the extension of the boundaries of the novel under French influence, and above all the example of *Stalky & Co.* in 1899 combined to encourage public school men and others to turn their experience and knowledge of school life to fictional use." (Mack, 1971: 186 – 7)

Kipling depicted a school that seemed to personify what was happening in the 'real' world. The combination of educational reforms and the demands of a national examination system had the effect of increasing academic competition thereby coercing the public schools to increase the amount attention they paid to academic work. The essentials of the archetype public school 'gentleman' which included manliness, games worship and self-control were being questioned during such national upheavals as the Boer War and World War One. Other factors such as the rapid industrialisation of Germany and America and the decline in the birth rate combined to focus attention on the fragility of Britain's pre-eminence.

The demise of the school story from this point was due in part to the genre becoming artificial and limited. Arnold Lunn, the author of *The Harrovians* (1913) was one of many who had become aware of the school story's 'lack of realism.' (Townsend, 1965: 91) Attempts by writers such as Desmond Coke in his novel *The Bending of a Twig* (1906) to parody the conventional school story and to show what school was really like did little to sustain the momentum that had been created twenty years previously. In the preface to Coke's novel *The Worm* (1927) it was written that "Education is, in these days, so vital that every serious school story must of necessity have theories below it: to underline them is bad art." (Trease, 1964: 117) It is a thought that was not necessarily echoed by other authors of note.

The publication of Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth* in 1916 captured the readers' imaginations with his revelations about public school life which were a source of scandal. In a story written for boys the schoolmasters are treated as background characters and act out their roles as the natural enemies of the pupils. His disapproval of the way in which the public schools operated stemmed from the inefficiencies exposed during the First World War where the leaders and officers were largely educated in public schools. This sudden resurgence of interest in the school story genre was carried further by writers such as Hylton Cleaver and Gunby Hadath who contributed to an outpouring of standardised boys' school stories. The 1920s heralded a time when many 'serious' writers attempted to rescue the genre from the doldrums by producing fiction set in schools.

Whilst the readership remained to be mainly middle class both Kipling and Waugh were being read by adults as well as by adolescents and a new literary form was emerging from the boys' school story, the critical school novel for adults.

1.7 The *Gem* and the *Magnet*

The importance of such magazines as the *Gem* (1907) and the *Magnet* (1908) cannot be underestimated in the development of the school story. In its heyday the *Magnet* had a weekly print run in excess of 200,000 although this was to reach its nadir by 1930 to an output of 120,000 as a direct result of competition with the publishers D.C. Thomson. (Richards, 1988: 289)

With the introduction of St. Jims in the *Gem* and Greyfriars in the *Magnet* the genre was set for a period of self parody and flight from reality. The *Gem* had been joined by its companion paper the *Magnet* in 1908 which introduced Billy Bunter, Harry Wharton and Co. The stories appealed to the great majority of boys as well as being enjoyed by adults. When Charles Hamilton, the creator of Bunter writing under the pseudonym of Frank Richards, was asked if he could find nothing better to do than write stories for juveniles his reply was "There is nothing better." (Samways, 1984: 85) In his capacity as the sub-editor for the *Magnet* George Samways was asked by his editor, Herbert Hinton, why Dean Farrar's *Eric: or Little by Little* had been a best seller. Samway's reply was that "it was a morbid and sentimental story, extolling virtue and condemning vice, and its pious tone appealed to the Victorians. Such a story would cut no ice today." (Samways, 1984: 89) Not to be deterred by Samway's final assumption Hinton urged Samways to compose something along the same lines as *Eric* on the pretext that the editor would "send copies to all the parsons and headmasters, to prove that the *Magnet* is fit reading matter for young minds." (Samways, 1984: 89) Although the the experiment of 'The Sunday Crusader' in Issue 400 proved to be a partial success it came as little surprise that the readership had changed from its Victorian counterpart and the twentieth century readers showed their preference for the lighter side of school life. The newer comics, such as *Wizard, Rover, Hotspur* and *Champion,* contained stories that were not totally centred around public schools although 60 – 65% were. (Gathorne-Hardy, 1977: 219) Despite the popularity of such stories the

readers were accepting a social system which, from 1900, became rapidly outdated.

Other sister publications such as *The Penny Popular* and *The School Friend'* received a mild reception compared to the enormous popularity of the *Magnet* and the *Gem*. Whilst the former's contents consisted mainly of a reprint of early Greyfriars and St. Jim's stories the latter was a weekly periodical for girls and featured Bessie Bunter although her popularity did not remotely rival that of her brother's character, Billy. The *Gem* catered for a younger age group than the *Magnet* whilst its stories were "lighter than those of Magnet as a result." (Fayne & Jenkins, 1976: 200)

The comparisons between the two papers extended to the types of rivalry that existed in Greyfriars and St. Jim's. Whilst the schoolboy rivalry at St. Jim's was provided by the nearby Grammar school the Grammar schools in the *Magnet* were opposed by Greyfriars, Cowfield County School and Highcliffe. From a literary standpoint Fayne suggests that the difference in the stories of the two papers was that the St. Jim's tales mainly revolved around school life whilst those involving Greyfriars were "stories of schoolboy adventure." (Fayne & Jenkins, 1976: 201) The *Gem* is acknowledged as the first school story paper whose plots were almost entirely school stories whereas the storylines of the *Magnet* were either totally or in part away from the school setting. The accolade that was afforded to the *Gem* was simply put as : " Published every Wednesday – Every Story a Gem." (Fayne & Jenkins, 1976: 213) A survey conducted a few years before World War Two in a very large elementary school revealed that about 75% of the pupils were reading Thomson papers, the Scottish firm of D.C. Thomson & Co. Ltd. (Lofts & Adley, 1970: 13) Low down in the pecking order were *The Gem* and *The Magnet* whilst the *Boy's Own Paper, The Scout* and *The Children's Newspaper* were anchored in the bottom places. Based on this sample it could be assumed that the Amalgamated Press had been resting on its

laurels and were still issuing papers that were appealing to the boys of the 1920s and not keeping pace with the times.

In its heyday *The Magnet* had a weekly print run in excess of 200,000. By 1930 it had fallen to 120,000 as a direct result of competition with D.C. Thomson papers. By 1940 *The Magnet's* circulation had diminished to 15,800 copies a week. (Richards, 1988: 289) The domination of the Amalgamated Press papers had finally come to an end.

1.8 The issue of Class and the school story

In the knowledge that many of the readers of the school story genre were from the lower middle and working classes and that the genre was something that was peculiar to England Orwell had no compunction when he wrote his essay, *Boys' Weeklies* (1939), to denounce the school story and its writers. The very fabric on which the genre depended was lambasted by the former King's Scholar of Eton. The idiosyncrasy of the school story was the key element that attracted the reader in the first place whether he was familiar with the routines and rituals of a public school or not. In Orwell's view the popularity of the novels and magazines that perpetrated the myths of the public schools was due to the fact that "...in England education is mainly a matter of status....it is quite clear that there are tens and scores of thousands of people to whom every detail of life at a 'posh' school is wildly thrilling and romantic. They happen to be outside that mystic world of quadrangle and house-colours but they yearn after it, day-dream about it, live mentally in it for hours at a stretch." (Orwell, 1968: 467)

Within the walls of the middle-class bastion known as Greyfriars Frank Richards' Falstaffian creation, Billy Bunter, emerges as the overweight schoolboy who eschews all the school rules and whose monstrous appetite remains untamed despite incessant punishment and general

discouragement. In common with other authors who delved into the school story genre Richards capitalised on the genre as being an ideal vehicle for moral, didactic or simply entertaining fiction. As a fictional character Richards regards Bunter as one who “wanders from the truth without realising what he is doing. He doesn’t realise that he is a liar.” (Tucker, 1999: 10) Although Richards had never been to public school himself he was in a position to create characters, believable or not, for a working class and lower middle-class audience who would never go to public school. The power of both the stories and stock characters is that they were in one sense unreal.

George Orwell was one critic of the genre who pointed out its failings as creating an unreal world, being jingoistic, rooted in privilege, xenophobic, rabidly class-conscious and denying the existence of sex. In 1939 his essay based on ‘Boys’ Weeklies’ he was moved to state that “the school story is a thing peculiar to England. So far as I know, there are extremely few school stories in foreign languages. The reason, obviously, is that in England education is mainly a matter of status. The most definite dividing line between the petite-bourgeoisie and the working class is that the former pay for their education, and within the bourgeoisie there is another unbridgeable gulf between the ‘public’ school and the ‘private’ school.” (Hildick, 1970: 109) Of the reasons for the genre’s popularity, besides the exclusiveness, was its fertility as a subject and the opportunities it offered to the writer of children’s fiction.

As previously suggested the actual theme of a children’s novel need not be within a child’s direct experience but rather within the range of a child’s imagination. Billy Bunter’s creator, Frank Richards, was a prolific writer of children’s stories but he was severely criticised by George Orwell in 1940 on both literary and sociological grounds. One of Orwell’s major criticisms was that the Bunter stories were likely to persuade working-class boys to accept the established social structure of society: “He reads into my very innocent

fiction a fell scheme for drugging the minds of the younger proletariat into dull acquiescence in a system of which Mr Orwell does not approve." (*Horizon*, 1940) Such was the condemnation of the unreal and glamorized atmosphere of Richards' public schools and the gulf between this and the quality of life experienced by proletarian boys who enjoyed the *Magnet* and the *Gem*. In this instance there is little in the way that the reader can relate to the stories through direct experience and the imagination is stretched to its limits in order to make sense of the social world that exists at Greyfriars. The same criticism could be levelled at writers of fairy stories and fantasy fiction for creating worlds removed from the limited 'reality' known to readers from underprivileged homes. However, according to Richards, Orwell does acknowledge that "in *The Magnet* the characters are so carefully graded, as to give every type of reader a character he can identify with." (*Horizon*, 1940)

Richards felt that Orwell's idea of realism would in fact destroy rather than edify the working-class readers: "Mr Orwell would have told him that he is a shabby, little blighter, his father an ill-used serf, his world a dirty, muddled, rotten sort of show." (*Horizon*, 1940) Snobbishness was another accusation that Orwell directed towards Richards as Richards made an aristocrat character act as an aristocrat should. In his defence Richards claimed that "it is an actual fact that, in this country, noblemen generally are better fellows than commoners." (*Horizon,* 1940) Richards questioned Orwell further by asking "is it snobbish to give respect where respect is due: or should an author, because he doesn't happen to be a peer himself, inspire his readers with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness?" Orwell was quite adamant in his observations that the working classes only entered into Richards' literature as 'comics and semi-villains' in a similar way that they were represented by Blyton. Richards defended his position by informing Orwell that "there are three working-class boys in the Greyfriars Remove...each one is represented as being liked and respected by the other boys." (*Horizon*, 1940) Professor Robert Roberts also defended Richards by

advocating that his work “set ideals and standards. These our own tutors, religious and secular, had signally failed to do. In the final estimate it may well be found that Frank Richards during the first quarter of the twentieth century had more influence on the mind and outlook of young working-class England than any other single person, not excluding Baden-Powell.” (Chevalier & Kirkpatrick, 1989: 824)

The *Magnet* readers of the 1920s were a very satisfied and appreciative group and with the dawning of a new decade the official favourite school story writers were listed in the *Magnet* as Talbot Baines Reed, Warren Bell, Gunby Hadath and Harold Avery, writers who had earned the respect of a once captive audience. (Samways, 1984: 189) The school story, however, was becoming a victim of its own success. As the genre lost credibility the counter-attack was to come. Orwell’s scathing indictment of the pre-war school story as a kind of writing ‘sodden’ with the worst illusions of the imperial past and selling an escapist fantasy to the “scores of thousands to whom every detail of life at a posh public school is wholly thrilling and romantic” (Townsend, 1965: 115) helped to demolish the imaginary world of Greyfriars and St. Jim’s.

1.9 Girls’ school stories

As girls’ education followed boys’ so did their stories and the genre is of particular significance for the social and cultural history of women. The plots largely followed the same pattern of the boys’ stories except that the female protagonists were girls who were often wrongly suspected of a transgression such as stealing an exam paper or cheating on a prize essay.

Angela Brazil set the standard during the golden age of the school story in the interwar years to be followed by Dorita Fairlie Bruce and Elsie J. Oxenham who wrote the *Abbey School* stories from 1920 onwards. Another

contemporary was Eleanor M. Brent-Dyer with her *Chalet School* series from 1925. Private education was regarded as a privilege for girls and universal secondary education after the age of 14 was not provided by the state until 1944 although local education authorities were establishing secondary schools from the late nineteenth century. There were, however, too few of them to cater for the number of girls who could have profited from them.

In contrast to the boys' school story the girls' school stories evoked school communities which the reader would have liked to belong rather than run away from. Similar to the boys' schools the girls' school was hiearchichal and the head girl was supported by a group of prefects with all manner of privileges and sanctions. In the 1900s Brazil, Bruce, Oxenham, Dyer and, not least, Blyton re-energised the school story at a time when the boys' story flagged. By 1920 the novels' heroines possessed personal qualities which included "a sense of fun, well-meaningness, reasonable intelligence, a sympathetic attitude to the school's reputation, respect for at least one mistress (usually the Head)." (Cadogan & Craig, 1976: 180) Images such as these provided a popular source of amusement for the reader as well as providing stereotypical role models.

The comparison of strong female characters could also be made with the aggressive nature of the 'masculine' characters of the boys' stories. It was acknowledged by certain female authors, including Dorita Fairlie Bruce, that the characters could be sub-divided into three sets: major characters, lesser ones and the silent majority. (Cadogan & Craig, 1976: 187) Within this range of characters the plot would revolve around an exclusively female environment in which any nastiness would more often be meted out by the older pupils. An exception to this rule of thumb, however, could be typified by nine year old Nina Carey in Brazil's novel *The New School at Scawdale* (1940) who is described by the author as 'an independent little person...and capable of asserting herself and airing her own opinions.' (p.90)

In effect Brazil became the female equivalent of Talbot Baines Reed in that her writing method was to plan the plot before the characters and use lots of slang in the dialogue. As a former head girl of Manchester High School Brazil launched her writing career with *The Fortunes of Philippa* (1906) which had the traditional boarding school setting which was followed two years later by the publication of *The Third Class at Miss Kaye's* (1908) which placed a stereotypical emphasis on organized sports, especially hockey and cricket. The school became an institution with institutional values which were not necessarily those of society.

The emphasis on romantic friendship in novels such as *Bosom Friends* (1909) and *A Fourth Form Friendship* (1911) contrasted with the elements of organized sport that appeared in her previous works. Brent-Dyer's creation of the *Chalet School* series, set in an international school in the Tyrol, was followed by many more girls' stories chiefly with school settings. As a headmistress of a school in Hereford she would have little problem in invoking realistic characters to adorn her fictional settings.

One of the reasons that boarding schools acquired the happy and carefree image after the 1900s was the influence of the new genre of girls' literature. Generations of girls grew up on a diet of exciting adventures that seemed to happen only at boarding schools. Through the school stories and comics girls and parents learned that the best times of all were had in boarding schools.

The 1920s classic girls' story reached its peak both in quality and quantity and in 1924 43% of all new girls' novels published were school stories. (Sims & Clare, 2000: 10) This was at a time when the popularity of the boys' school stories had begun to decline. Schoolgirl story papers such as *School Friend* (from 1919), *Schoolgirls' Own* (from 1921) and *Schoolgirls' Weekly* made little attempt to present school in a realistic way but instead relied upon the

readership to have a basic concept of the girls' public school which had been portrayed by the hardback writers. The stories constituted an enclave of privilege and the writers themselves tended to come from the professional middle classes with few having the experience of higher education. At this point 40% of the books that were read by girls were school stories, (Sims & Clare, 2000: 14) a type of fiction in which the basic structure of moral principles and characters remained unchanged until after World War Two. The inter-war years was a golden age for such stories. In common with most school story writers of the inter-war years there was no time for eccentricity. The fictional schoolgirls of this period were presented as being very self-assured thus bypassing the nervous embarrassments of adolescence. By 1920 185.000 girls were attending recognized grammar schools which represented a rise of 165,000 in just over twenty years. (Cadogan & Craig, 1976: 178)

1.9.1 The Girls' Own Paper

In a similar manner to the way in which the boys' school stories were initially serialised in the *Boys' Own Paper* the counterpart for the girls' stories was the *Girls' Own Paper* which had been launched in 1880. The popularity of a publication such as *The Boys' Own Paper* was based on the serialisation of boarding school stories and in the same way the *Girls' Own Paper* provided a vehicle for potential school story writers.

By the 1930s the publication had become a journal which proved to be more of a popular choice for middle-class girls whose parents were persuaded by the paper's educational articles dealing with religion, careers, needlework and sport. For the same reasons it proved to be less attractive reading material for the working-class girls who regarded such literature as 'prissy'. (Cadogan & Craig, 1976: 263) If the *Girls' Own Paper* had produced a writer of a similar status of Baines Reed it might have attracted a wider readership.

School was not the major focus of the stories penned by the nineteenth and early twentieth century female authors which is why Angela Brazil is often acknowledged as the first populariser of girls' school stories.

The 1930s witnessed a sea change in the readers' attitude to school stories as the mythical aspects of the boarding school were being gradually replaced by the readers' actual experiences (Ray,1996:351). The middle classes were sending their daughters to high schools and the large boarding schools in greater numbers and the county high schools were greater in number by this particular decade. As a result of greater accessibility to a middle-class education the school had lost some of its glamour and the attraction of school stories abated. Nationalism seemed to displace feminism which was considered to be irrelevant in the 1930s. In this climate in which there was a transition in attitudes towards career opportunities for girls "the school story thus reflected external changes that were transfigured by Angela Brazil's imagination into a rapturous celebration of girlish pleasure." (Briggs, Butts & Greenby,2008:175) Women were able to vote and the job opportunities were, theoretically, equal to men's.

Looking beyond 1940 the *Girls' Own Paper* contained fewer conventional school stories than in the previous decade as it was perceived that girls were losing interest in the school story genre at an earlier age. (Cadogan & Craig, 1976: 280) The adolescent girl was more focused on starting work and becoming more involved in the war effort. To further this sense of nationalism the *Girls' Own Paper* published articles which stressed the need for its readers to continue their education which would help to rebuild English life in the aftermath of the war.

1.9.2 The historical accounts of children's literature and their relationship to social class

Successive generations of adolescent readers had been brought up on the boys' school stories of G.A. Henty and Talbot Baines Reed (1880s – 1902) which combined the moralistic with the melodramatic. The fiction that had been written for a specific readership many of whom were not conversant with private education but most likely viewed such an experience as a privilege.

The girls' school stories of Brazil and Brent-Dyer (1940 – 1951) extended the image which played upon the hierarchical structure of the boarding school operating within exquisitely manicured grounds or a picturesque Tyrolean setting. It would not be until the 1930s when the county high schools were viewed as less of a privilege and more as an expectation that the acceptance of the class structure was reinforced.

As the schools themselves were representative of hierarchical institutions they also mirrored the hierarchical structure of the society of which they were an integral part. Schoolboy fiction, particularly, was seen as a microcosm of British society, "a little world which metaphorizes its larger counterpart – a world where battle is waged between the upright and strong who are the supporters of society's structure and the cowardly and the weak who, by design or not, threaten the ordered and happy state." (Wright, 1982:60) Hughes had cast the die in *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* a didactic and moralistic novel which provided a political and patriotic framework which was welcomed by the book publishers of the day. Hughes and his contemporary, Dean Farrar, aimed to teach a particular set of values for boys who were largely representative of the upper middle-class.

The educational structure at the time of Hughes' publication in 1857 was of paramount importance in explaining the increasing popularity of the school story following *Tom Brown's Schooldays.* The potential market for a public school education increased sharply during the latter part of the Victorian era on the basis of a wealthier and more literate population. The public school story emphasised the reality that a longer and more favourable education could be bought by a few, a social inequality that would be perpetuated well into the 20th century by the authors of school stories who followed on in the footsteps of Hughes, Farrar and Henty. The connection between the quality of a culture and the quality of its education system was a factor that was to become a central feature of many school story authors.

Characters whom were deemed as poor in Victorian stories were often regarded as objects of charity and were of no interest in themselves. The school stories seemed firmly middle-class and continued to be so up until the Second World War. The writers were undoubtedly of that class as were most of the readers.

The early texts played up the arrant contrast between wealth and poverty which signified the class distinctions that were apparent in the 19th century and would set the pattern for the class-conscious texts of Blyton who could be accused of creating characters in her *Malory Towers* series that promoted utter snobbery. (Saxby, 1997:263) It was not the first time that class consciousness had been brought to the public's attention through text as G.W.M. Reynolds, a Chartist sympathizer and founder of *Reynolds' Weekly Newspaper* (1850), used his newspaper to publicise the social inequality which existed in Britain at the time of publication. Viewing the layers of society in a pyramidal form in which the Sovereign was followed by the Aristocracy, the Clergy and the Middle Classes. The structure was underpinned by the masses that made up the Industrious Class. Although this evocation of a society which exemplified inequality appeared years

before Marxist ideology it was evident that “the lowest step in the ladder is occupied by the class which is the most numerous, the most useful, and which ought to be the most influential.” (Turner, 2012:28)

Although the shape of the social structure saw little change leading up to the next century the importance of education within it remained paramount. Owing to their connection with the elite the public schools provided sufficient material for school stories which appeared in the *Hotspur* and its companion papers although the schools were boarding establishments that lacked the aristocratic pretensions of Richards’ Greyfriars and St. Jim’s. The legacy of the public school stories, however, reinforced the shape of the nation’s culture and social structure whereby a significant proportion of the elite shared a common autonomous perspective, an expectation of deference from subordinates and even a private language that will be referred to in Chapters 5 and 6. The stories confirmed through their convincing characterisation and plots that the complex of elitist values had to be preserved and passed on to successive generations of boys. The prevention of action from outside change was exemplified by the 1944 Education Act by which the public schools were unaffected by the introduction of the tripartite system.

The essence of elitism ensured that those who were associated with the public school system would perpetuate a pride of being class-conscious. To be a member of a classless society would have been anathema to a class which believed that the function of a gentleman was to lead and not resent his superiority. The norm of manliness was sufficient to sustain such feelings of supremacy. In this respect Wright would agree that “not only is this society hierarchical, but one of the major functions is to breed the leaders in the hierarchy for their job.” (Wright, 1982:60) A growing public awareness in the 1920s that the public school system needed to justify itself against other types of school provided sufficient motive for future authors such as Tring

and Hildick to create fiction which would promote dominant role models and legitimate aspirations of those pupils attending state day schools. In this case the genre would also be an influential medium for social criticism as the novelists' increasing interest and experience of teaching in such schools would enable them to produce a novel or play that could be both descriptive and critical of the class system. This is encapsulated in Tring's novels relating to Barry Briggs' aspirations of entering the local grammar school (*Barry's Exciting Year,* 1951) and Croft's grim but realistic view of a secondary modern school education in *Spare The Rod.* (1954)

Although Butts would argue that to view literature as a direct response to social conditions as "too deterministic and reductive" (Butts, 1992: xiii) I would respond by asserting that the historical accounts of children's literature described a popular fiction written by generally conformist authors who inculcated approved value systems, thus accepting and celebrating the class system as it stood. The stratification of the nation's society could not be separated from the novels that were a direct imitation of the social life of Victorian Britain and the dualism of the education system.

2.1 Concluding Remarks

The early success of the school story can be attributed to a wide variety of social and educational factors. To a large extent the genre reflected changes in social attitudes from the mid-nineteenth century which provided writers such as Hughes and Farrar the opportunity to create a literary world where everything was reconcilable and for the best. They were the forerunners of a genre that aimed less at depicting life than guiding morals. Later on Kipling's writing symbolised the patriotic element in the genre in an historical moment of the Boer War. In contrast to this, however, critics of the genre such as Orwell wanted a wider social outlook in boys' stories and comics although he was not to know in 1939 that the form of the public school was about to be

altered dramatically by the Second World War. It was a time also of rapid industrialisation characterised by a growing concern with education outside the family. Patriotism was an aspect that was dealt with by various authors of the school story genre in different ways, from the matter-of-fact manner in Hughes' writing to the more jingoistic tones of Kipling. It was into this social situation that the renowned Talbot Baines Reed moved during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Writers like Reed had the fortune of making their literary contribution to a genre that responded to a time when the middle class family saw formal schooling as important for upward social mobility. During the late Victorian era the public schools provided an increasingly important educational experience as well as being useful to make vital social connections. The schools had both influenced and had been influenced by the social structure by developing a set of values and a way of organising themselves to teach the code of behaviour involved. *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was Hughes' model that was to influence writers like Reed and which, in turn, had a significant effect in determining the direction in which the new elementary schools and secondary schools developed. This development was underwritten by the school stories of the time.

By the 1930s the morally didactic element of the genre had largely disappeared and Billy Bunter symbolised this tendency. Fifty years before the school story had fulfilled a propaganda function in supporting a set of values held by those in power, but this was no longer the case. The changes in the social structure forced the writers to react to new views in education, religion and morality and the critical attitudes of schooling and family.

In an article published in the Evening Standard in 1937 the Very Reverend W. R. Inge DD was offering his view of the uncertainty of whether the public school system would survive until the end of the century lamenting that "whatever happens to the schools more than enough will remain to keep alive the memory of a very remarkable section of English life." (Evening

Standard, 4th August, 1937 p. 7) By 1940 the writers of the school story were faced with the challenge that the genre had to change, decline or disappear.

One factor relating to the public schools' survival was the appeal of popular culture where, in boys' fiction, there still existed a dominant strain that was broadly supportive of public schools and their ideals. As popular literature provides images of the attitudes and values of various groups in society the school story was instrumental in selecting aspects of school life and, in the case of public school stories especially, created an acceptable image from them.

The dominance of the public school story relied upon the promotion of particular attitudes, educational and social policies. Although the popularity of the school story experienced its peaks and troughs the readers could relate to the genre regardless of their educational or social background. The school story helped to create an established and recognisable set of archetypes and value systems which perpetuated the dominant ideology. From a reader's standpoint the values and attitudes in his society may be inferred from the attitudes of characters in fiction and their behaviour. Children's literature, particularly that which was written in the pre-and post-war years, reflected a socially divisive society whose characters reflected social order and rank.

In the next chapter the focus will be on the readership of the school story and the manner in which the publishers of this particular genre attempted to maintain their appeal to its cross-section of readers. The chapter will also attempt to judge to what extent the publishers of children's literature, including the popular magazines, satisfied their readership.

Chapter 4

The publishing of children's popular literature, 1940 – 1960

"Within capitalist societies their [the publishers**] continuing existence depends upon financial success."** (Musgrave, 1985 p.4)

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine to what extent the publishers of children's literature, including the popular magazines, met the differing tastes of their readership. The analysis will, in turn, help to illustrate the interrelationship between the preceding two chapters. Reference to two prominent trade publications, *The Bookseller* and *The Junior Bookshelf* has been central to my research as they have provided factual contemporary evidence of the impact of the literature that was written for adolescents in the 1940s and 1950s. One could assume that both publications would also reflect a general policy that "the good publisher habitually exercises individual taste and judgment." (Warner, 1973: 2) Besides its relevance to contemporary popular literature the chapter will also assess the popularity of the school story and the part that the genre played in relation to its depiction of social inequality in Britain between 1940 and 1960.

The publishing of children's books in the years preceding 1940 is encapsulated in Colwell's observation that such books were "considered a rather troublesome side-line." (Colwell, 1937: 195) She was writing at a time when children's novels were largely considered for prizes and the appeal of such novels often fell short of the recipients' expectations and tastes. In addition to this unfortunate phenomenon the children's librarians were restricted to purchasing "mediocre stories of little literary value, printed cheaply on poor paper" (Colwell, 1937: 195) due to the paucity of their budgets. The format of a children's novel incorporating binding, paper and

print has always been an initial selling point of a novel although the standards would vary amongst the various publishers. The more elaborate the cover the more expensive the production costs. This factor alone was a prime consideration in the mass marketing of children's novels, a governing factor when costs would be passed on to the consumer which dictated the price of the publication.

The more well-known publishers by 1940 included Cape, Nelson, Harrap, Pitman, Blackwell, Faber, Blackie and the Oxford Press. As varied as the novels were with regards to their content so too were the end-products by the time the publishers had packaged the literary contents. The better-class publishers such as Cape and Faber tended to play safe and keep the format of children's books similar to the adult novel with the result that some book jackets lacked immediate appeal to the prospective reader.

Once the novel had been selected, the success of the publishing firm depended a great deal on the quality of the writers whom they had elected to publish. The success of the publishers Amalgamated Press, for instance, was largely due to the writing skills of Frank Richards and his series of school tales centred around Greyfriars whilst D.C. Thomson's fortunes were founded upon the popularity of Tom Brown's Rugby and Talbot Reed's Grandcourt which suited both middle-class and working-class children.

The generation of children before 1940 had been brought up on the boys' novels of G.A. Henty and the rip-roaring adventure stories in *The Boys' Own Paper*. The thrilling accounts of the Boer War had promoted an image of war as both "honourable and glorious." (Stevenson, 1984: 49) These were typical images which permeated the adventure novels, and even boys' school stories. Novels which captured a young mind's imagination were central to a novel's success which would ultimately lead to the publisher's success. The

nationalistic content of many boys' novels which appealed to a boy prior to 1939 was sufficient for Helen Martin to comment in 1936 that "there is a possible relation between periods of intense nationalism and the children's literature at the time." (Musgrave,1985: 245) It is a phenomenon that certainly existed in children's literature during the inter-war years although critics such as George Orwell might judge the unrealistic world-view expressed in the magazines such as the *Gem* and the *Magnet* as failing "to prepare young men for their future responsibilities as citizens." (McAleer, 1992: 3) The relationship between a novel's content and its effect on the reader had been recognised in the previous century by Blackie & Son whose general catalogue of 1892/3 stated that:

"Ninety-nine boy readers out of every hundred will acquire from these books enlarged conceptions of duty, of chivalry, of courage, of honesty, and of true manliness, and be quite unaware that to inculcate such ideas was the purpose of the author." (McAleer, 1992: 21)

To see if this was true of a later generation of readers it is necessary to assess, firstly, the relationship between the publisher and their authors.

Literature for the masses had gained a firm foothold in Britain by 1940 due mainly to the advances made in the teaching of reading since the late nineteenth century. With an expanding readership came the inevitable emergence of new publishers to print and distribute the literary outpourings. The cycle of publication: choose, manufacture and distribute, gained considerable momentum until the outbreak of World War Two. The children's authors who enthusiastically embraced writing as a profession from a creative standpoint and, hopefully, as a potentially lucrative activity could not escape the fact that a book was a manufactured product which was commercially distributed and, as a consequence, was subject to the laws of supply and demand. The role of the publishers was to make an informed

selection from the mass of writing that would be submitted to them and which would best suit their public. In order that the publisher would make sufficient profit from the choices made it would involve a judgment of fact as to what exactly the public may desire and what it would purchase. In the case of children's literature, and the school story in particular, the publisher in 1940s Britain would have needed to induce a compatible writer-public relationship. The highly profitable specialized school story series written by such authors as Frank Richards was certainly encouraged by Charles Skilton Ltd. and Cassell & Co. to continue for as long as the stories remained a mainstay of popular children's literature.

The roles that school and public libraries and reading surveys played in assessing reading choices are analysed later in the chapter but the selection which a publisher makes from the outset is crucial "as each selection presupposes a theoretical public in the name of which and for whose benefit it is made" as well as presupposing "a sampling of writers which is supposed to reflect the needs of that public." (Escarpit, 1971: 52) In the case of the school story the more successful novels were those in which the reader could identify more easily with the characters besides escaping into the unknown world of boarding schools and beaks.

1.2 The Relationship between the Author and Publisher

By the twentieth century the full range of genres within children's literature had been developed, the "shape and content of which was determined by the changing needs and aspirations of the middle class." (Leeson, 1976: 32) This was particularly true of the writers of the school story but it is also important to realise that the authors of children's literature came from a variety of social backgrounds that would affect the tone and content of their work as well as provide "the source of inspiration of children's books from one generation to another." (Leeson, 1976: 29) It was the role of the publisher to act as the

mediator between the author and the reader after considering the impact the novel may make on its prospective readership.

A successful relationship between the author and his publisher depended upon several factors, the most important being the potential of the publication selling well. In the face of changing social conditions that were influenced by world events as much as national developments the publishing trade was fundamentally “in capitalist ownership and staffed by the middle class, who supplied the values, the morals, the atmosphere and – above all – the authors.” (Leeson, 1976: 29) Popular fiction is an organic genre that is subject to change and it was vital that publishers adapt in order to maintain their momentum as they are, by necessity, in the business to sell.

The values and morals to which Leeson alludes were always central to children’s fiction in that authors would select and provide images of society and aspects of real life that embodied a number of common attitudes and concerns. From the fiercely patriotic writings of Kipling to the middle-class images of the school stories the editors of children’s fiction would act as educators for as long as it was financially feasible. The importance of values such as good manners, respect and public service was emphasised and in this respect much of the children’s literature before World War Two was didactic in nature by which the children’s author had the same moral responsibility as a teacher. (McAleer, 1992: 205)

Contributors to publications of the Religious Tract Society, for example, created the kind of world which they thought ought to exist, where right as they saw it triumphed.

From the author’s point of view the anxiety that existed was a desire to communicate something original as well as write for financial reward. Her appeal to a juvenile audience that was a distinct market by 1940 was crucial

to a publisher's reputation. The writer who could appeal to children's tastes, rather than to teachers and librarians who chose novels for prizes, was the one that a publisher would regard as the goose that would lay the golden egg. The overlap between an author's work as being educational as well as artistic was a balance that was not necessarily something that each author could or would attain but the balance between writing with a moral message and having a sense of humour was proving to be a winning combination for writers such as Arthur Ransome, C S Lewis and Frank Richards. The financial success of an author based on the appeal to his readers was something that other authors often envied.

An author's *raison d'etre* for writing will ultimately vary from one author to another. To entertain his audience was the whole purpose of Frank Richards' writing. Richards believed that "Happiness is the best preparation for misery if misery must come...It will help to give the boy confidence and hope. I tell him that there are some splendid fellows in the world, that it is after all a decent sort of place. He likes to think himself like one of these fellows and is happy in his daydreams." (Fox, 1976: 184) For a prolific writer of children's stories it was a philosophy that stood Richards, and his publishers, in good stead.

Richards supports this view of the authorship of the school story by proclaiming that it was the duty of a boys' author "to entertain his readers, make them as happy as possible, give them a feeling of cheerful security, turn their thoughts to healthy pursuits, and above all to keep them away from unhealthy introspection, which in early youth can do only harm." (Richards, 1952: 540) For the child reader of the 1940s this sentiment was one that sincerely reflected a genuine concern of the author.

Ransome's attitude to writing for children could not have been more different yet success and fortune did not elude him: "You write not for children but for

yourself, and if, by good fortune, children enjoy what you enjoy, why then, you are a writer of children's books -...No special credit to you, but simply thumping good luck." (Townsend, 1971: 13) For C S Lewis his *raison d'etre* was because "a child's story is the best art form for something you have to say." (Townsend, 1971: 13) To be a children's author was certainly no easier than writing for adults, requiring just as much skill and just as much knowledge of psychology. To write well for children is a gift and a rare one and it was the responsibility of the publisher to find out what children wanted and to satisfy their demands.

Geoffrey Trease was quite vocal during the latter part of the 1940s when he expressed his awareness of the changing perceptions of the children's author. Writing in *The Junior Bookshelf* Trease put forward his view that "He [the children's writer] is widely regarded as a mere purveyor of entertainment...An increasing minority of people, parents, teachers and so on...are swinging back to the old-fashioned view that he is also, either implicitly or explicitly, a moralist and educator." (*The Junior Bookshelf*, 1949: 204) He was, however, in full agreement with Richards' philosophy that the entertainment factor is of paramount importance and this was compulsory for all writers of children's fiction.

Jan argues that children's literature is a genre that is "continuously evolving, partly through the response of its child readers and partly through the dynamism of its creators and purveyors." (Jan, 1974: 1) She has described the eternal triangle in children's literature whereby the reader, author and publisher are reliant on each other for continuity and personal satisfaction and success. The question of reader satisfaction was one that both author and publisher relied upon for financial as much as professional reward. That the child readers had distinct opinions of their own as to the novels which really interested them was a crucial factor which the publisher needed to

recognize. It is only when the best is available for the children that they will want the best and demand it as their right.

The achievement of reaching a consensus between the author and the publisher to produce literary works which would appeal to the adolescent reader was crucial. Both parties would be intent on making a decent living based on healthy book sales and their working relationship is neatly summarised by C.E. Vulliamy in *Prodwits Guide to Writing* that "The representative publisher is not a literary person. He knows how books are printed, sold and advertised; but he does not know how they are written. He treats authors, even successful authors, with a patronising levity which is frequently beyond endurance. He is convinced that writing is a very simple job, if you compare it intelligently with his own. An author's modern concern with his own work is regarded as comical arrogance, and the author himself has to endure many witticisms on this favourite theme. (*The Bookseller,* January 17th 1948: 60) The partnership between the author and the publisher could often be tenuous and this is especially true in the case of the school story genre when it competed with the burgeoning markets of the adventure and mystery stories.

1.3 British Society and the School Story

Boarding schools constituted the setting of the majority of the earlier school stories and the success of such authors as Enid Blyton was a publisher's dream in financial terms. The appeal of the boarding school as an institution, which was regarded as a product of 'bourgeois capitalism', (Steedman, Urwin & Walkerdine, 1985: 115) was capitalised in Blyton's *St. Clare's* and *Malory Towers.* In the 1940s the school story genre had become somewhat complacent about such issues as inherited wealth and class privilege which perpetuated a rigidly hierarchical world in which 'white and middle-class' were the accepted norms. (Frith, 1985: 115) The manner in which class and

social mobility were recognisable elements of the school story could best be exemplified by the experiences of two individuals who themselves became popular children's authors. The reminiscences of Edward Blishen and Adele Geras and their reading of school stories in their youth have a close correlation with the images created by the school story authors. Both authors show their appreciation of the genre especially as Blishen was state educated and Geras was privately educated.

Blishen's perceived ideals of a grammar school education were gleaned from the pages of school stories written by such luminaries as Talbot Baines Reed and Harold Avery. To Blishen such fiction was "oddly melancholy, sadly moral. Bedecked as I was, in a setting so ancient, I could look forward to boys...drowning, or dying of consumption; and, always, struggling with their souls. School at this level was a tragic business." (Blishen, 1978: 79) Although Blishen may not have been a student of the public school as described in the Victorian school stories they did provide him and his contemporaries with images that were compatible with academic rigour and class division which was more noticeable in 1930. If one's social status could not always be distinguished by one's accent then one's dress code could make the distinction more apparent as Blishen remembers:

"In the paying pupils I saw all the handsome and fascinating snobs and heroes and bounders of the school stories. The sense of distinction was very powerful. They had different voices; and some hammered home the difference by wearing plus fours. Difficult now, I think, to make it clear how assertive of social superiority this form of trousering could seem in 1930. I had simply never imagined that a schoolboy could so garb himself. It was more arrogant than top hats." (Blishen, 1978: 80)

The feeling of unease that Blishen evokes in his recollection of his grammar school produced a dichotomy of emotions, however. The pleasure of gaining a scholarship in the first place was tempered by feelings of apprehension as the school hall, evocative of Greyfriars, was remembered as an "academic

dungeon.” (Blishen, 1978: 80) The graffiti in the hall that had been etched by previous generations of students conjured up opposing emotions: “I hated and feared it: for it seemed right that it should be so awful. That’s what one had won the scholarship for – to pass into a world whose superiority was measured by the dread it roused in you.” (Blishen, 1978: 80) Blishen’s conflicting attitudes towards his *alma mater* would certainly be attributed to his real experiences of the school as much as to his reading of school stories prior to entering the grammar school.

Adele Geras’ recollections of reading school stories were clearly based on plot and characterisation, two pivotal aspects of any story. For a girl who was later to become a student at Roedean, an archetypal girls’ public school, Geras’ enjoyment of the school story is clearly apparent in her account of such tales: “The first, the most obvious thing we liked was this whole closed world and not only that. It was our world. No grown-ups running the show; we were in charge.” (Tucker, 1999: 94) Through her own reading of school stories and her experience of Roedean Geras would, like many of her contemporaries, appreciate the whole system of values that the school story would cultivate based on a hierarchy that excluded adult interference.

This feeling of being separate from the adult world, where childhood is recognized as a separate state of being, is substantiated by Geras’ belief that “The second thing we liked was the way problems were always solveable: the kind of thing that we could envisage ourselves solving. They had to do with personal relationships.” (Tucker, 1999: 94) Her last comment was very typical of the girls’ school story where a community of pupils were completely self-contained and where strange and improbable things might happen. In this respect the characters, although prone to stereotyping in some novels, had to provoke some reaction in the reader. For Geras “The third thing was that we identified with the characters. There was always a clever one, a musical one, a good actress, a good sportswoman, etc etc. And

so everyone reading the book could easily imagine herself in one or another role.” (Tucker, 1999: 94)

The other attraction of the school story was possibly an overriding reason why this particular genre was popular with its readers: simplicity. Geras speaks on behalf of other readers when she explains that “The fourth thing was the books were easy. There was absolutely nothing in them which your parents had to explain to you. There wasn’t a single word whose meaning had to be looked up in a dictionary.” (Tucker, 1999: 94) Where reality and fiction slightly merged in Blishen’s experience the school stories that Geras had been brought up on had evoked quite a different world from the realities of Roedean.

“Roedean, when I got there, proved to be quite different from Malory Towers. In fact, we used to re-read the books as Juniors and laugh at just how different our school was...and it’s only now I realise why it was. It was simply that the world that was Roedean was more complicated. Relationships with schoolfriends and teachers were more difficult. More time was spent working and studying and reading. A lot more emphasis was placed on academic achievement. There were no midnight feasts. We were separated from our homes and parents, and that was certainly something Enid glossed over.” (Tucker, 1999: 95) On this particular subject, separating fiction from reality, Geras would be speaking on behalf of countless girls who had experience of boarding school life. For the reader who was a day pupil at the local primary or secondary school, the world of Malory Towers, although not a tangible experience, remained a pipe dream. For this reason alone the girls’ school story was guaranteed a longer run than the boys’ school story.

By 1947 few young people over the age of 14 were showing much enthusiasm for the school story. For the boys in particular the decline in interest could have been “due to the knowledge that school is less of an

adventure than it used to be." (*The Junior Bookshelf,* July 1947: 62) In order to reinvigorate interest in the genre amongst the young male readers it was incumbent upon the authors to move with the times. Although Frank Richards was quite content to peddle his formulaic *Bunter* stories Edgar Osborne, writing in *The Junior Bookshelf* felt that the moribund state in which the school story had found itself could be retrieved "provided writers who attempt such work, are wide awake to modern trends in social development." (*The Junior Bookshelf,* July 1947: 62) It would seem that the school story had lost much of its freshness by the beginning of the twentieth century and had become to be regarded as a style of juvenile literature which was mechanically fashioned. The repetition of the actions of stock characters who were limited to a choice of scenes involving routine school activities only compounded to make the boys' school stories a much less attractive reading proposition by the late 1940s.

The more tangible reasons for the decline in interest of the school story could also be attributed to the change and progress in the adolescent's social life and school education. Although these two major factors will be explored in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6 it would be pertinent to express the point that the public's conception of the education process was changing following Butler's 1944 Education Act and that the teaching fraternity was supportive in adopting a democratic philosophy of education as part of a full democracy in Britain.

The school story had become an anachronism as the incidents described in the novels were vastly different from the school life of more than 75% of the adolescents who were reading them, regardless of gender. (*The Junior Bookshelf,* July 1947: 64)

The results of a survey of adolescent reading choices that was conducted in South Wales in 1942 was a precursor of the situation which the school story

found itself in 1947 in that its popularity had given way to other genres such as mystery and adventure. Its staunchest supporter, however, was found among its female readers.

Table 1

Blaina, South Wales: Social Survey, 1942 (Average age = 14)

	Favourite books	
	Among boys (%)	Among girls (%)
Mystery stories	77	40
Adventure stories	70	58
Love stories	6	34
Hobbies	38	8
School stories	20	43
Scientific books	20	12
Classics	0	16
Historical stories	0	11

Source: (McAleer, 1992: 144)

It is apparent that among boys, adventure and mystery stories were as popular as school stories were among girls. By 1947 it was concluded that one in every six boys preferred adventure books to school stories. Osborne extended his conclusion by declaring that the reading interest of girls differed from that of the boys due to the fact that “the range of interests for girls was limited by social conventions.” (*The Junior Bookshelf,* July 1947: 64) To

make the school story more appealing to the adolescent reader of the late 1940s required the combined effort of the author and publisher to understand that most children are realists. Children who were content with their home background may well have pitied rather than envied the small proportion of boarding school pupils. Adventure stories, as the 1942 survey illustrated, were more sought after than any others. Although school stories would become more out of fashion by the end of the decade, however, series such as the *Chalet School* and *Malory Towers* had their adherents.

1.4 Children's Magazines and their Publishers

Reading material that attracted a sizeable following of boys in senior schools in 1940 was undoubtedly the 'bloods', cheap magazines that were published on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. The attraction of the more popular 'bloods' would have been a combination of ripping adventure yarns and popular cartoon characters together with human interest stories which appealed particularly to boys of 12 years and above. Such publications were referred to by by Jenkinson in his survey of adolescent literature as a passing phase which many boys enjoyed and which, in turn, provided the publishers with a profitable source of income. Far from discrediting the 'bloods' outright, however, Jenkinson was of the opinion that the boys would eventually outgrow them. (*The Bookseller,* September 19th 1940)

A combination of circumstances affected the publication of children's novels and magazines during World War Two. Paper rationing, for example, was a major concern as this was enforced from 1940 to 1949. This measure was implemented by the Control of Paper Order of February, 1940 and consequently restricted the publishers to 60% of their annual supply of paper in 1939. (McAleer, 1992:60) As the juvenile demand was more stable than the fluctuating adult market the publishers used their initiative for purposes of damage limitation. Reprints, a new and cheaper edition of popular children's

titles, helped to satisfy the tastes of their readers as well as maintaining a healthy following for such prolific writers as Capt. W.E. Johns and Enid Blyton.

Whilst the publication of reprints helped to a large extent to alleviate the paper rationing situation there were casualties as many titles and larger firms suffered. The table below illustrates a comparison of the number of titles published at the beginning and the end of the war.

Table 2

	1939	**1945**
Amalgamated Press	91	42
Odhams	25	17
Pearson	24	9
D. C. Thomson	22	17
George Newnes	19	8

Source: (McAleer 1992: 62)

It can be seen from the table that the Amalgamated Press' list was cut by 54% whilst its keen competitor, D.C. Thomson, had to cut its list by 23%. Another measure that was introduced to combat the paper rationing was the need to publish weekly magazines on a fortnightly basis whereas long-running titles such as *Gem, Magnet* and *Chums* ceased to be published altogether.

1.4.1 What do boys and girls read? The need for new methods of education

This section is related to an investigation into the out-of-school reading interests of 3,000 boys and girls aged 12 to 16 that was conducted in 1949 by Mr. A.J. Jenkinson, a Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester. Although his findings were primarily addressed to teachers his recommendations following the investigation were also of immediate interest to the publishers of children's novels. The main recommendations centred on the importance of novels in schools in that they were to have "more attention in school than any other form of literature." (*The Bookseller,* September 9th 1940: 310) Within his scope of recommendations to the English teachers of boys aged 12 or 13 in secondary schools and all teachers of literature in senior schools was the recommendation to reading one school story each year. In order to facilitate such an approach Jenkinson was of the opinion that "The boys will be ready to recommend one to the teacher, and, tactfully handled, will debate the merits of the half-dozen popular authors of school stories. The teacher will have no difficulty in borrowing a book of this sort.

"In return he may lend Hughes, Kipling, Ainsworth or, perhaps, read short passages on schools, schoolboys and school teachers – which abound in literature. A teacher, aided by his pupils, could build up a wide bibliography of references to schools in literature." (*The Bookseller,* September 19th 1940: 310)

A recommendation such as this would not have come as a great surprise from a lecturer in Education in 1940 although his reference to school stories was also put into context alongside other contemporary popular genres such as detective and historical stories. Jenkinson's other recommendations with regard to the reading of magazines and 'bloods' were referred to in the previous section.

The tables overleaf indicate the most popular titles according to a survey conducted in 1940 and clearly reveals which ‘bloods’ remained to be popular choices owing to a balance of adventure stories and school stories. The boys’ school stories in this instance tended to contain more of an adventure element whilst the girls’ stories concentrated more on personal relations. Table 3 denotes the reading choices of boys in senior schools whilst Table 4 indicates the favourite choices of boys in secondary schools. The difference between senior and secondary schools was that the secondary school was selective and all the boys were exposed to pre-School Certificate literature syllabuses. (Jenkinson, 1940: 71) Each table is divided into thirds. The titles in the top third of each table show that magazines were read by one boy in five or more during a month. Those titles in the bottom third in each table are magazines that were read by fewer than one boy in twenty during a month. In each table the magazines that are not mentioned were read less frequently.


THE
BOY'S OWN PAPER
No. 639.—Vol. XIII. SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 1891. Price One Penny.
THE COCK HOUSE AT FELLSGARTH.
A PUBLIC SCHOOL STORY.
By Talbot Baines Reed,
CHAPTER XIV.—THE SHOP OPENS.

Figure 4. Cover of Boys’ Own Paper,1891.

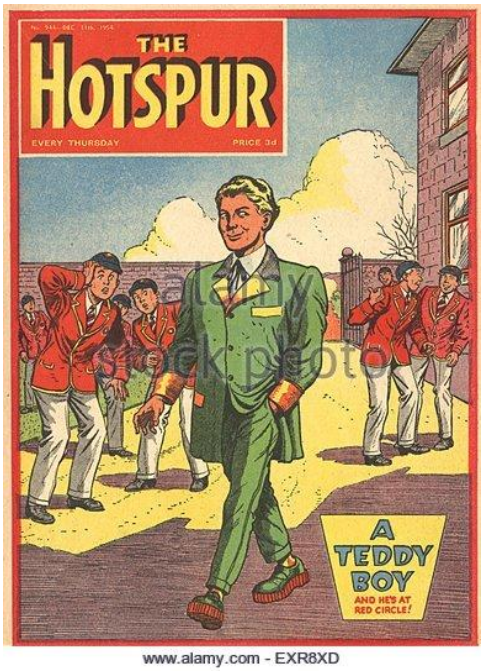

Figure 5. Cover of a 1950s edition of Hotspur

Table 3

The Most Widely Read 'Bloods' (Boys in Senior Schools)

At 12+		At 13+		At 14+	
279 Boys In Group		287 Boys In Group		68 Boys In Group	
Wizard	173	Wizard	173	Wizard	41
Hotspur	139	Hotspur	149	Hotspur	36
Rover	138	Rover	140	Rover	35
Skipper	132	Skipper	130	Skipper	29
Adventure	124	Adventure	112	Adventure	22
Champion	60	Pilot	66	Magnet	14
Pilot	53	Champion	53	Champion	13
Magnet	32	Magnet	47	Pilot	12
Chips	29	Mickey Mouse		Chips	7
		- 132 –			
Larks	29	Weekly	28	Funny Wonder	6
Butterfly	28	Chips	25	Butterfly	5
Triumph	23	Larks	25	Larks	4
Mickey Mouse		Film Fun	23	Triumph	4
Weekly	22	Funny Wonder	23	Modern Boy	4
Film Fun	21	Jester	21		
Joker	20	Triumph	20	Jester	3
Tip Top	20	Comic Cuts	19	Mickey Mouse	
Jingles	18	Butterfly	18	Weekly	3
Comic	16	Modern Boy	17	Comic Cuts	2
Jest	14			Film Fun	2
		Joker	10	Joker	2
Funny Wonder	13	Jingles	9	Jingles	1
Modern Boy	13	Tip Top	6	Tip Top	1

Source: 'What Do Boys and Girls Read?' A.J. Jenkinson, 1940 p. 70

Table 4

The Most Widely Read 'Bloods' (Boys In Secondary Schools)

At 12+		At 13+		At 14+		At 15+	
304 boys in Group		211 Boys in Group		250 Boys in Group		171 Boys in Group	
Wizard	150	Wizard	87	Hotspur	68	Wizard	37
Hotspur	145	Hotspur	86	Wizard	63		
Rover	132	Rover	69	Skipper	53	Hotspur	20
Skipper	114	Skipper	57			Magnet	19
Adventure	97	Adventure	52	Rover	44	Modern Boy	14
Champion	74	Champion	50	Champion	37	Boy's Own	
				Adventure	33	Paper	9
Modern Boy	52	Modern Boy	37	Magnet	32		
Pilot	43	Magnet	37	Modern Boy	21	Champion	8
Magnet	40	Pilot	28	Pilot	19	Rover	8
Gem	28	Triumph	16	Triumph	16	Scout	6
Film Fun	23		---	Boys' Own		Skipper	6
Mickey Mouse		Film Fun	8	Paper	13	Adventure	5
Weekly	20	Mickey Mouse				Boys' Cinema	5
Triumph	15	Weekly	3	Gem	12	Pilot	5
				Scout	9	Triumph	2
Boy's Own				Film Fun	4	Film Fun	2
Paper	14			Mickey Mouse		Mickey Mouse	
Scout	14			Weekly	1	Weekly	0

(Source: 'What Do Boys and Girls Read?' A.J. Jenkinson, 1940 p. 68 – 69)

An analysis of these summaries reveals, firstly, that the order of popularity in Secondary Schools and Senior Schools is very much alike. In Table 1, for example, at 12+ in both sorts of school precisely the same magazines top the list, and in precisely the same order. Indeed, each one of these six is, in both sorts of school, read by more than one in five of all the boys in the school. This would suggest that there are strong affinities between some of the reading tastes of boys in both sorts of school at this age. The *Wizard*, for instance, is at the top in both schools although it is read by roughly one in two boys at the Secondary Schools, and by nearly two out of every three in the Senior Schools.

There is a marked divergence between the two types by 14+ when one could infer that the wider opportunities of the Secondary School boy, coupled with his greater intellectual maturity, are causing a steady recession of interest in this type of literature. By 15+ it has noticeably diminished. The extraordinary popularity of the *Wizard*, however, is still evident as it is still being read by one boy in five. It is interesting to note also that the Secondary School boys of this age were all being exposed to School Certificate literature syllabuses as these were selective schools.

Overall Jenkinson's 1940 survey showed that reading as a leisure activity was popular among all ages; few did not participate.

By 1944 the number of juvenile readers of novels had "vastly increased." (*The Bookseller* June 8th 1944: 496)This was due in part to the enterprising ideas that were put forward by the Public and County Libraries in the form of 'Children's Book Weeks'. In addition to whetting the literary appetites of young readers it also had the knock-on effect of adding to the publishers' purses. The publisher's orders for the popular Arthur Ransome's novels, for instance, were more than three times that he could supply. Authors such as Ransome were proof that "the fame of a publishing firm, to say nothing of its

solvency, depends upon the writers for whom it markets." (Warner, 1973: 28) The work of the public libraries in Britain in the wake of World War Two was considerable and proved to be a service that added to the reading experiences of children of all ages, thus serving as an effective go-between bridging the reader and publisher.

The sales of children's magazines at the beginning of the 1950s actually showed signs of stagnating, the cause of which may have been the falling proportion of children in the population. In England and Wales the proportion was 22.1% (9, 692,000) in 1951 compared to 23.8% (9, 520, 000) in 1931. (McAleer, 1992: 69)

In the same way that publishers of popular children's magazines depended upon good writers for a healthy circulation then publishers of children's novels also relied upon good authors. Chatto & Windus were not dissimilar to D.C. Thompson in maintaining that "if any general truths may be perceived...it is that good writers attract other good writers; that it is sound to develop along regular lines of interest, whether fashionable or not; and that it rarely pays to lower standards in the hope of passing success." (Warner, 1973: 32) It was vital for any publisher of children's books to be vigilant of changing tastes and to ensure that they published authors who would appeal to a wide and changing audience.

1.5 The role of the Public and School Libraries and children's reading choices

In their efforts to ensure that they were catering adequately for the needs of its readers the public libraries would conduct local surveys. One survey that was designed by the Middlesex County Libraries on March 26th, 1947 set out

to answer three questions:"whether the library fulfils its obligations to the community, what borrowers read and what they do not read, and whether the library service is adequate to satisfy or to stimulate readers' demands." (*The Bookseller* May 1st, 1948: 888) The survey was an analysis of the fiction and non-fiction books on issue to the public on the day chosen and endeavoured to reflect the interest of book-borrowers in the different categories of books by relating the issue figures to the total number of books in stock. The figures given in this particular survey revealed that out of the stock of 71, 254 fiction titles, representing 41.2% of the library's total stock, 50,909 were on that day in the hands of borrowers. Approximately three-quarters of the fiction stock were in the hands of readers. It would appear that the thirst for reading had not abated since 1944.

A small-scale review of children's tastes in reading was a strategy that several public librarians carried out. In the following survey which was conducted by Mr. Stanley Jones, the Headmaster of the Evelyn Street Modern School, Warrington the sample consisted of boys and girls ranging from 12 to 14 years of age. The school was situated in an industrial area of the town. The survey also included responses from similar aged girls from the Richard Fairclough Modern School in Warrington which was situated in a more residential area. Both schools had school libraries and the children either used the school library, the Central Library, or both. Seventy-eight papers were completed by the pupils at Evelyn Street Modern School and 31 papers were returned at the Richard Fairclough Modern School.

The survey involved the analysis of the responses to the following twelve questions:

1. What kind of book do you prefer – "fat" (long stories) or "thin" (short stories)? Say why.
2. Do you prefer "rough" (spongy) or "shiny" (art) paper?
3. Do you prefer books with or without illustrations?

4. Which illustrations do you like better – “line” (black and white) or coloured plates? Say why.
5. What are your favourite books – school stories, scout and guide tales, historical novels, discovery and exploration, adventures in aeroplanes, submarines, or just simple adventures like Arthur Ransome tells about?
6. Name the authors you like best. Try to put them in order of merit.
7. Do you use books to help you to find out things, e.g. how to improve your games, swimming, cricket, badminton, netball, stamp collecting, hobbies, nature, etc.?
8. When do you do your reading – everyday, on wet days, at week ends, at meals, in bed, only in school?
9. How do you find out about books – from other children, your teachers, B.B.C. book talks, “trial and error”, or in what other ways?
10. What do you really think about our library and how would you set about making it more to your liking?
11. What suggestions have you to make for a Children’s Reading Room:

(a) Would you like a quiet room?
(b) What would you like to find there?
(c) How would you attract boys and girls to the library and Reading Room?

12. Have you any other suggestions to offer?

Source: (The Library Association Record September 1947: 217)

Mr. Jones concluded that “the children hold quite definite opinions and really demonstrate that they know why they prefer one thing rather than another.” (*The Library Association Record* September 1947: 218) With regard to the favourite type of book it is of some significance in relation to this study that the School Story came top of the results with 50 children naming it as their favourite choice. I am sure, however, that the girls’ school would have given the answers to this question extra weighting based on their overall preference for school stories.

Warrington, like most northern industrial towns, would have catered for a wide range of reading abilities. Attitudes to reading would have been influenced by parents and teachers but it is interesting to note that the survey found that “No fewer than 83 children say they find out about books from other children, whilst the surprising total of 23 listen to the B.B.C. book talks – mostly the children from the school in the more residential type of neighbourhood.” (*The Library Association Record* September 1947: 219) Even though the sample was small the statement serves to illustrate the

effects of social inequality on the child readers with regard to their attitudes to recreational reading. At a time in Britain's social history when leisure time was increasing the need to adopt positive reading habits lay in the hands of librarians and their book selections.

What the boy and girl reader preferred also deserved some analysis. Once again the public library service was in a position to be able to provide some feedback regarding the reading tastes of juvenile readers. In August, 1949 it was ascertained from the information that was available at the time that "the preference of boys differs from that of girls in that they read chiefly for entertainment. Girls read for the additional reason of understanding life, of enlarging their outlook on life and 'to get their eyes opened' in an easy and pleasant way and like to be made to think. Hence girls prefer books about the more everyday affairs of life, while boys prefer books about the weird and unusual and read partly to 'get away from everyday life.'" (*The Bookseller* August 6th, 1949: 512) An awareness of reading tastes was essential for public libraries in order to stock their shelves with reading material that was relevant to its users and which hopefully encouraged children to read established authors as well as emerging ones.

The views of experienced and respected librarians such as Eileen Colwell, the children's librarian for the Hendon Public Library, were also influential as the position of children's librarian would have given her total control over the choice of children's reading books and could indirectly affect the success of a publication as a result. In giving her opinion of what constituted "a smashing book" Colwell was adamant in that "it was agreed that a really good story was the first essential...and that it should have a good opening. Secondly, real life characters were asked for, which were different from each other." In addition, "a right sense of values on the part of the author was insisted upon." (*The bookseller* January 14th 1950: 367) Comments such as these would certainly provide both the author and the publisher with a pertinent

reminder of what their readership desired in a novel. Librarians, after all, were in a position to influence the contemporary reader and proved to be a valuable link between the author, publisher and reader.

Public libraries were, however, not the only source of information with regards to which novels appealed to the juvenile market. Mr Martin Parr, a youth club leader in Shoreditch, had studied the reading habits of the 150 boys between 14 and 18 years who attended his club. They were drawn from grammar schools (18%), central schools (25%) and senior schools (57%). (*The Times* Feb. 15th, 1950: 8) It is interesting to note that the school story at this point still had a place in reading favourites as Parr reported that "Henty was a great deal more popular than would commonly be thought; after 50 years there was a 'regular, consistent demand.'" The report also mentioned that Kipling's *'Stalky & Co'* was still popular.

By 1950 periodical surveys such as these, planned in collaboration with librarians and the book trade, to gauge trends in the reading habits of the public were instrumental in providing a piece of the cultural jigsaw of British society. Increasing competition also came from the radio and television although "most librarians would agree that the radio had on balance helped rather than hindered the progress of the library movement." (*The Times* September 22nd, 1950: 2) As part of the nation's cultural heritage the library service was celebrating its centenary year in 1950. At this point in its history it was to acknowledge that "There are no barriers to what people read. The choice is their own, children and adults alike. Behind every social, cultural, educational organisation has the reservoir of 42 million books in the public libraries." (Library Association, 1950: 3) The belief that reading tastes and habits are formed in childhood underpinned the Library Association's philosophy, a philosophy that "made the British public library an essential instrument for democracy and a demonstration of the democratic way of life." (Library Association, 1950: 7) The goals that were set for a public library to

attain were clearly stated in the Library Association's centenary assessment when it asked:"Is your library helping your people to become sensible, critical, tolerant, understanding citizens with a sense of purpose and responsibility? Is it helping them towards a better enjoyment of life?" (Library Association, 1950: 31) These are questions that could also have been asked by all people associated with children's literature including teachers, authors and publishers.

As children tended to find a favourite magazine and stick with it over long periods they were also loyal to particular authors. The interwar period witnessed the rise of several popular authors whose works, in series, resembled 'bloods' in book form, alongside the formulaic plots and stock characters which were central features of the school story. Notable among the more favoured authors were Captain W.E. Johns ('Biggles'), Richmal Crompton ('William'), and the doyenne of girls' school-story writers, Angela Brazil. It is reasonable to assume that bonding with fictional heroes was more intense among children than adults, which would have encouraged sales of series of books.

As publishers of children's fiction it was important for the various companies to keep abreast of their readers' partialities to the published authors. Surveys conducted by provincial libraries helped them to maintain this level of vigilance. The table overleaf illustrates the findings of a survey that was carried out by Manchester City Libraries in 1949 which is probably representative of general tastes, including lower-middle- and working –class children.

Table 5
Favourite Authors in Children's Sections of Manchester City Libraries, 1949

	Number of copies	
	in use	**left on shelves**
Percy Westerman	334	518
Herbert Strang	-	-
G.A. Henty	6	60
Charles Dickens	-	-
John Finnemore	-	-
Angela Brazil	205	94
Andrew Lang	-	-
Enid Blyton	943	38
W.E. Johns	559	123
Richmal Crompton	398	21
Alison Uttley	344	146
Arthur Ransome	100	148
T.H. Burgess	129	69
C.B. Rutley	117	131
Louisa May Alcott	83	90

(Source: 'Popular Reading and Publishing', McAleer, 1992: 137)

Henty's popularity as an author of school stories was certainly waning by 1949 as young readers considered anything written before 1914 as ancient history. The survey clearly shows the genres favoured by young people from the lower-middle- and working-classes. For the boys the choice was adventure and mystery whilst the girls were choosing school stories and

thrillers. Captain W.E. Johns epitomized a new breed of conscientious writers for young children who bore a great responsibility in “protecting vulnerable young minds.” (McAleer, 1992: 143)

As a leisure activity in the post-war years reading was regarded as a form of escapism, a welcome release from the comparatively dull existence at home and at school. (McAleer,1992:136) To complement the action and immediacy of the cinema a reader could seek excitement and adventure between the pages of a novel. Whilst the boys could satisfy a natural curiosity of such exotic matters as public-school life the girls could satisfy their curiosity of affairs of the heart. Reading for information was something that was common to both sexes.

The table below and continued overleaf illustrates how popular reading amongst juveniles compared alongside other leisure activities based on a nationwide social survey in 1949.

Table 6

1949. Social survey, nationwide

	Boys (%)		**Girls (%)**	
	12 – 13 years	**14 – 15 years**	**12 – 13 years**	**14 – 15 years**
Outdoor sport or games excluding cycling and walking	69	56	68	35
Reading:				
Comics	75	55	71	49
Library, other books	54	58	79	83
Cinema:				

Less than once a week	29	32	34	30
Once a week	30	34	39	37
Twice a week or more	39	34	25	32
Watching football	74	69	18	25
Listening to wireless	76	80	88	91
Needlework, knitting, dressmaking	-	-	73	74
Cycling	56	54	45	44
Dancing	9	12	15	31

(Source: McAleer, 1992: 137)

From the results it can be seen that broadcasting had surpassed reading in popularity although the reading of ‘comics’ (‘bloods’ as well as *The Beano*) and other books was still strong, particularly among schoolboys and schoolgirls.

In contrast, some surveys conducted after the war confirmed an apparent decline in reading. Reading was ranked in third place, after the cinema and dancing according to the results of a questionnaire sent to 4,000 Liverpool Youth Organization members. A 1950 survey of 1,000 adolescents aged 14-19 in Birmingham placed the cinema and youth organisations ahead of reading. (McAleer, 1992: 136)

The efficacy of the public library system in Britain at the beginning of the 1950s was highlighted in September, 1950 by Lord Mountbatten, who served as the Fourth Sea Lord. One of his former responsibilities was “the maintenance of the library services in all sea-going ships and shore establishments of the Royal Navy.” (*The Times*, Sept. 20, 1950 p.5) In his role as a speaker at the annual conference of the Library Association Mountbatten complimented the Association on its efforts to ensure that the British population “could enjoy comparably handy and free access to books.

At least one in four people of this country was a regular registered borrower from a lending library." (*The Times*, Sept. 20, 1950 p.5) Furthermore, Mountbatten emphasised the undeniable connection between education and the library service as he claimed that "The tremendous spread of education in the past 100 years could not have taken place if it had not been closely tied to the provision and development of the public library system." (*The Times*, Sept. 20, 1950, p.5) It was vital that the children were served well by their local libraries who had done a sterling task of building up good children's departments which were being well utilised. The task of the librarian to encourage and guide their young readers was indeed a great responsibility but one that complemented the work of the teaching profession.

In many ways, bringing the range of literature that was available to the attention of the adolescent reader the work of the librarian helped to lessen the gap between the children from a middle-class background and those from a working-class home. The social inequality that lay behind the basic affordability of novels that was denied to working-class parents was somewhat reduced by the accessibility of novels in both school and public libraries.

An indication of post-war reading trends was hinted at by Mountbatten who had read that "users of libraries were today reading fewer novels than they did a few years ago" and that "the public taste in fiction could be improved by the provision of better novels...It was the old dilemma of whether to give people what they wanted or what was considered they ought to want." (*The Times,* Sept. 20th 1950 p.5) It certainly echoed the dilemma which faced the publishers of children's novels at the time, especially when the publishing of what was deemed 'good' literature for the younger reader was in competition with 'comics' that contained material which incorporated an increasing level of violence. In these circumstances the librarian within schools and public

libraries had the opportunity to select novels that would counterbalance the cheaper and less worthy ideas which had been promoted by cheap novels or, indeed, the cinema.

The encouragement of a healthy reading habit was incumbent upon a child's parent, teacher and librarian in addition to peer recommendations. From the librarian's perspective three main aims were outlined at the Library Association's conference. The first aim of a public library was to "provide a means of entertainment." (*The Times*, Sept. 20, 1950 p.5) The task of the librarian in this instance was to tactfully try to encourage the young reader to "select those books which combined enjoyable reading with a high standard of culture." (*The Times* Sept. 20, 1950 p.5) The contribution that a librarian could make to a child's education in general was another aim. Besides being the basic provider of books the skilled children's librarian could also make a difference "by the care and guidance in the selection of books." (*The Times*, Sept. 20, 1950 p.5) The third aim related to the service that the library could provide once a person had left school.

1.6 The Hulton Readership Survey 1950

The design of the sample which was obtained for the 1950 Hulton Readership Survey was to obtain a microcosm of the population of children aged from 8 to 15 in Great Britain. In order to eliminate bias the children were not interviewed in the presence of parents. The sample that was selected was based upon variables that included gender, age group, the type of school within each gender and the specific age group for England and Wales. (see Table 6) The fieldwork was carried out in June and July, 1950. The schools included grant-aided, direct grammar and independent schools which were recognised as "efficient". (Hulton, 1950: 1) Children at work were

also included in the sample. The number of children attending independent schools for each sex and age group had to be estimated. 2004 interviews were distributed over the child population in the proportion contained within each stratum, so as to be truly representative.

Table 7 shows that the *Eagle* was a very popular comic which was mainly due to its inclusion of contemporary material that dealt with space travel in addition to adventure stories and hobbies. The fact that it had a following from both girls and boys is testament to the awareness by its publishers of a changing audience who were interested in a combination of current affairs and popular series in much the same way as Bunter had entertained a previous generation in the *Gem.* With such a plethora of magazines to choose from there would be a strong likelihood that at least one would appeal to a child reader. By 1950 D.C. Thompson was the largest publisher of magazines outside London with 30 titles as compared with the 70 papers published by the Amalgamated Press. (McAleer, 1992: 169) By vigorously researching its readers and responding to their changing tastes D.C. Thompson were able to maintain a prominent position in the field of magazine publishing.

The competition between the two main publishers of children's magazines, D.C. Thompson and the Amalgamated Press, based in Dundee and London respectively, had been a long-running affair. Before the *Gem* and *Magnet's* demise in 1939 the *Hotspur* had countered both of these publications with stories of public-school boys at the Red Circle School.

By 1950 the *Boys'Own Paper,* published by the Religious Tract Society, was experiencing a declining popularity in a cut-throat mass market. According to one of the paper's employees, George Milhill, the reason for its dwindling readership was that "in the end I suppose they couldn't afford these good

authors. It was a job to keep the circulation going – really hard going." (McAleer, 1992: 241)

School libraries, being perhaps more accessible than public libraries, were also a useful source for reporting on reading choice. In 1952 *The Bookseller* was in a position to comment on the most popular novels in the school library. Its report stated that the "established favourites in the senior schools are Richmal Crompton, Enid Blyton and Kathleen Fidler in the lower classes, and W.E. Johns, the two Watermans, E.J. Oxenham and H.D. Boylston in the upper forms." (*The Bookseller* February 9th 1952: 228) It can be seen that several school story authors such as Blyton and Oxenham were still popular choices at a time when the diversity of genres was growing.

Whilst some of the school story authors could be accused of snobbery in their novels through their portrayal of the hero or heroine Mr. Charles Nowell, the City Librarian of Manchester, offered a frank appraisal of contemporary children's literature which had much in common with the criticisms directed at the school story literature, past and present. In relation to the claim of the present day children's books being remote from the lives of so many children Nowell claimed in his reort that "conscientious attempts to set stories in backgrounds familiar to the 'new reader' are rarely successful with the readers for whom they are intended." (*The Bookseller* August 23rd 1952: 642)

Whilst a popular novel such as *A Family from One End Street* would find a more receptive audience among the children who lived in the middle-class suburbs the children for whom it was intended found their greatest pleasure in escapist literature such as fairy stories. Nowell condoned this attitude as a "hopeful sign" in that "they refuse to confine themselves within the limits of their environment, but demand stories that will take them out of it." (*The Bookseller* August 23rd 1952: 642) This sentiment certainly paralleled that of

Table 6

BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEWS

	TOTAL		BOYS	GIRLS
Total No. of Interviews	2004	100%	1020	984
BY AGES				
8 years	250	13%	126	124
9 years	259	13%	132	127
10 years	262	13%	132	130
11 years	251	13%	131	120
12 years	249	12%	126	123
13 years	246	12%	125	121
14 years	243	12%	127	116
15 years	244	12%	121	123
BY AREAS				
Greater London	324	16%	152	172
South-East (except Greater London)	323	16%	187	136
South-West and Wales	227	12%	110	117
Midlands	305	15%	167	138
North-West	249	12%	109	140
North and North-East	319	16%	165	154
Scotland	257	13%	130	127

	TOTAL		BOYS	GIRLS
Total No. of Interviews	2004	100%	1020	984
BY TYPES OF SCHOOLS				
England and Wales				
Primary	815	41%	423	392
Secondary Modern	415	21%	192	223
Secondary Grammar	171	9%	102	69
Secondary Technical	28	1%	18	10
Direct Grant Grammar	45	2%	31	14
Independent	142	7%	60	82
Scotland				
Primary	128	6%	65	63
Secondary	86	4%	42	44
Independents	15	1%	9	6
BY OCCUPATION				
At School	1845	92%	942	903
At Work	159	8%	78	81

Source: The Hulton Readership Survey 1950

Table 7

READERSHIP OF CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES

BOYS AND GIRLS

	TOTAL		SEX-GROUPS				AGE-GROUPS					
			BOYS		GIRLS		8-10		11-13		14-15	
Number of Informants	2,004		1,020		984		771		746		487	
Estimated total population	5,200,000		2,650,000		2,550,000		2,000,000		1,940,000		1,260,000	
Readers of:-	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%	'000
EAGLE	43	2,230	60	1,580	26	650	47	940	46	900	32	400
MICKEY MOUSE	19	970	17	450	20	520	30	600	15	290	7	90
CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER	17	890	15	400	19	490	22	440	18	360	8	100
ADVENTURE	17	870	29	770	4	100	12	250	20	380	19	240
WIZARD	17	870	28	740	5	130	15	290	17	330	19	240
ROVER	16	850	27	720	5	130	13	250	19	360	19	240
HOTSPUR	16	830	27	710	5	120	13	260	17	340	18	220
CHAMPION	14	720	25	660	2	60	10	200	17	330	15	190
SUNNY STORIES	13	680	5	130	22	530	21	420	11	210	3	40
CHIPS	10	540	11	300	9	240	15	300	8	150	7	90
COMIC CUTS	10	510	10	260	10	230	15	310	7	140	5	60
TIP TOP	10	500	9	250	10	250	16	310	7	140	4	50
MECCANO MAGAZINE	9	490	17	450	1	30	8	160	12	230	8	100
WONDER	7	360	9	250	4	110	10	190	6	120	4	50
COMET	7	340	9	240	4	100	10	200	5	110	3	40
BOYS' OWN PAPER	7	340	12	330	*	10	4	70	9	170	8	100
SUN	6	310	7	200	5	120	9	180	5	90	3	40
JINGLES	6	310	7	180	5	130	9	180	5	100	3	40
SCOUT	4	220	7	190	1	30	4	70	6	110	3	40
COLLINS MAGAZINE	3	180	4	110	3	70	2	40	6	110	2	30
STAMP LOVER	3	150	4	100	2	50	2	50	3	70	3	30
PLAYWAYS	3	150	1	30	5	120	5	100	2	30	*	10
HEIRESS	2	120	*	10	4	110	*	20	2	40	6	70
GUIDE	2	100	*	10	3	90	1	20	3	50	2	30
PRACTICAL MECHANICS	2	80	3	80	*	*	*	*	2	40	2	30

* Either less than 1% or less than 10,000 readers.

Source: The Hulton Readership Survey 1950

the boarding-school stories which appealed, in the main, to the children of working-class families.

1.7 The Publishers' tactics for attracting readers

The growth of television and the appearance of the picture-story paper constantly prompted the magazine publishers to maintain their appeal which had been prompted by the wartime reading boom. School became a place of adventure as much as a seat of learning which made the setting all the more appealing to a boy. Patriotism and war were popular themes among boys and the D.C. Thompson editors used the school stories to great effect through their tales of heroic acts by schoolboys or agents posing as schoolboys. It was a master stroke on Thompson's part as such stories guaranteed reader identification as well as an enthusiastic reception.

The publishers, Gollancz, showed their perspicacity with regards to their readership by launching a children's list in 1959 under the direction of Livia and Hilary Rubinstein. They were advised by Robert Denniston who, amidst an expanding market in children's publishing, had an illuminating insight in to the children's book market:

"The only thing lacking – or very rare – I think is soul. I don't mean uplift or specifically religious books...but the assumption that life is important, and consists of more things than adventures or rockets or careers or clothes; that most of the world is ill, hungry and angry and we are not; that the privileges of a high living standard and a full stomach imply duties as well; that through the abundance and the apparent confidence in the future is fear that God is great and we are small, and it's a good thing to bear this in mind." (Hodges, 1978: 218)

This was a philosophy that was very much in line with the Religious Tract Society but whose evangelical concerns inhibited their publishing success in an increasingly secular world. Denniston was also expressing his views at a time when the public library service was becoming more aware of the important place which reading should hold in a child's education. As a purveyor of good literature the libraries relied upon the wisdom and foresight of people such as Denniston who advised the publishers to choose unlikely authors such as Nina Bawden and Peter Dickinson and not the established authors of children's novels. To Denniston the more appealing children's books "come into being like a first-class novel – someone's real, probably agonizing experience wrenched out of them and deposited as a serious work of art." (Hodges, 1978: 218) It was a radical view which most children's publishers would approach with some trepidation.

Universal education, in principle, had helped to provide the means by which children from all sections of society acquired the ability to read and subsequently enjoy all forms of literature. The 1950s proved to be a decade in which the British youth were being entertained by other popularised forms of entertainment such as the cinema and television, at least for those families who could afford one. Within this changing society of increased mobility which encouraged sociability and a more restless youth culture the book trade was in keen competition.

Whilst most fiction readers read in order to kill time when they were at a loose end, a small minority would make time in order to be able to read. Even those who had enjoyed the privilege of a public school education did not always leave school with a positive attitude to reading. A sentiment that was expressed by Herbert Morrison, the Lord President of the Council, in his address to the Library Association's conference in 1950, recalled his attitude to reading during his own youth. He declared that "reading was important even if only of adventure stories...or novelettes which were not pernicious in

character. People who never read were missing a lot, for reading, especially of well-written books...taught the language." (*The Times* Sept. 20, 1950 p.5) The foundation of his own education with respect to speaking and writing the King's English was owed to "the reading of good books and to listening to well-spoken people." (*The Times* Sept. 20 1950 p.5) Herbert Morrison was indeed another voice to convince the British public that English literature was a valuable heritage.

What was needed by the end of the 1950s was a consideration of possible inducements which could be offered to the child reader to make a more informed choice of novels. This was a task that would befall to the bookseller as much as to the children's librarian.

In contrast to the librarians' concerns regarding the quality of children's literature at the beginning of the decade, The Publishers Association, after issuing its 'Analysis of Schoolbook Expenditure' for 1958-9, declared that the next decade would be a "momentous one, so far as education is concerned." (*The Bookseller* July 2, 1960 p. 2384) Financial considerations would always remain at the forefront of the Publishers Association's minds whilst the effects of such deliberations came from Dr. J. Hunt, the President of the Association of Education Committees, who declared that "We are in at the point of major decisions which will possibly affect the education service for generations to come." (*The Bookseller* July 2, 1960 p.2384) Children's literature was certainly providing a basis for heated discussion between all the interested parties to ensure that the young reader would benefit from informed yet pragmatic decisions from the author through to the librarian.

The Amalgamated Press had been a successful publisher of children's literature since the nineteenth century until its closure in 1944. E.H. MacManus was quite right in his view that the publishing firm's success was due to its willingness to adapt to the times: "Times change, and the necessity

for constant variation, and new ideas grow with each succeeding generation." (MacManus, 1944: 5) In a similar manner D.C. Thompson & Co. of Dundee, the Amalgamated Press' arch-rivals, had acquired a reputation for shrewdness and hard-headedness, giving the public what it wanted.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

The publishers of children's novels and comics that dominated the inter-war years were undoubtedly The Amalgamated Press and D.C. Thompson. For a publishing firm to survive the changes in literary tastes amidst cultural growth it was necessary for the book trade to take note of such the changing diversity of reading tastes. The effect of World War Two on resources such as the acute shortage of paper was a factor which influenced not only the output of current publications but the quality of the finished product was also compromised. To a young person's eyes the outer appearance of such novels would not have appeared so attractive as they would thirty years later.

At the end of the war publishing, and to a certain extent bookselling, suddenly had to take part in a risky game involving money, where the price for survival was high and where an even greater gap between culture and commercialism developed. Meeting the needs of the juvenile readers who had been brought up on the novels of Kipling, Ransome and Henty presented the publishers with a challenge that could only be met by a powerful combination of a popular author and attention to presentation.

The influence of surveys in finding what the young reader wanted gave the publishers some insight into what was successful and which areas of children's literature required attention. This was illustrated by A.J. Jenkinson's survey of 1940 which concluded that reading was popular among all ages where few did not participate. On average boys and girls read between three and four magazines and four and six novels each month.

One effect of the war was that it intensified reading among children. Given that paper rationing and a limited supply were the inevitable results of the war demand for reading material remained high. The restrictions on leisure activities and expenditure coupled with the reduction in reading matter forced by paper rationing served to intensify the demand for reading which was regarded as the least expensive and most adaptable of leisure activities.

Children from lower-middle and working-class families were active readers though what they read may have differed from the middle class. As the 1940 survey clearly revealed the reading of ‘bloods’ among both sexes was especially popular particularly among readers who had not been shaped by the middle-class tradition of proper book reading.

Underpinning the healthy attitude to reading amongst the juvenile population was the growth of public interest in education during the war years. The 1944 Education Act had a significant effect on the secondary school pupil at a time when reading was proven to be still popular as a leisure activity in addition to being a necessary skill for academic study. Parental involvement in encouraging their children to achieve places in the grammar schools also helped to encourage the reading of good fiction to complement the constantly popular boys’ and girls’ magazines.

An astute publisher such as D.C Thomson would gauge the shifting trends in its readership and ensure that its publications were making a profit in a very competitive market by reacting to the changing tastes of its readers. For the juvenile market ‘reading’ would frequently mean reading the tuppenny weeklies which were referred to as ‘books’, a terminology which meant works of fiction for most people. An awareness of reading surveys, attendances at bookselling conferences and a vigorous approach to market research were strategies that were vital if a publisher was to retain or improve its position in the pecking order of book sales. The publishers managed their ‘products’ in

much the same way as a manufacturer would try to safeguard its product on the open market. To a large extent popular fiction could be regarded as a useful barometer of the tastes, ideals and aspirations of its readers and by testing the waters at regular intervals the publishers were able to maintain an interesting product within the book market. The role of accountants and marketing men involved with publishing houses cannot be underestimated whilst their efforts were singularly aimed at a mass market. A failure to keep pace with changing tastes would invariably contribute to a publisher's downfall as the Religious Tract Society found to its cost.

The contribution that the public library system made to the encouragement of reading was very significant. The professionalism and literary knowledge that librarians throughout Britain displayed provided a substantial basis for both the publisher and the reader. School libraries, too, served to support the work of teachers and educationalists by extending the range of fiction books and encouraging the reading of good authors. The work of organisations such as the Library Association, the Booksellers Association, Book Shows and the Children's Writers Group served to raise the profile of reading generally by reinforcing the affinity between the publisher and the reader.

Publishers like D.C. Thomson were family foundations run by a strong, influential proprietor and they would invariably adopt a paternalistic approach towards their readers. A publisher's success was undoubtedly achieved through the acquisition of an individual author or a particular series of magazines or novels. Changes in the economy and technological advances were additional factors that significantly affected the book trade from 1940 to 1960. Successful publishing firms such as D.C. Thomson could look to their fortune in times of war and economic depression by displaying a remarkable resilience. The combined efforts of teachers, librarians and publishers to promote the reading habit ensured that demand for their products was preserved.

The publishing and selling of children's novels throughout the two decades, 1940 to 1960, was undertaken at a time when the culture of Britain was influenced by profound social changes. Leisure time had increased, universal education had caused an increase in the literary standards of the nation's youth and the standard of living had risen sharply since the middle of the 1950s. Culture had been allowed into British homes through a widening range of media; radio, television and the long-playing record giving everyone the opportunity to see and listen to plays, operas, concerts and lectures. The new society that emerged after World War Two was a mass society in which everyone became a prospective reader although only a minority were habitual readers. The 1944 Education Act and the tripartite system of secondary education which followed produced a cultural stratification of the population. The pupils in the public school system continued to be regarded as representing a particular version of high culture developed by a national elite for whom culture meant what the lower and middle classes lacked. The 1960s would prove to be the decade when these classes developed a counter culture of their own.

Whatever the decade, however, survival in the book industry was geared to one aim in which "Author, publisher and bookseller alike are engaged in business, the business of selling, or trying to sell, something that may bring them a reasonable profit." (Publishers' Circular, Oct. 11, 1930 p. 513-14)

The next chapter will explore a selection of school stories that were published in the 1940s. As outlined in Chapter 1 I will be using discourse analysis as a means of identifying aspects of language and narrative which various authors used which highlighted certain social attitudes of the decade in which the novels were published. Whether this was intentional on the author's part will also be considered in addition to the social and educational changes that were influencing parental attitudes to their children's education.

Chapter 5

The depiction of social inequalities in British school stories of the 1940s

'A good children's book is one which uses language skilfully to entertain *and* either to represent reality, or to stimulate the imagination, or to educate the emotions.' (G. Trease, *The Junior Bookshelf,* December 1949)

1.1 Introduction

The development of the school story as a separate genre of children's literature will be explored in the following chapter but it is of relevance to state at this point that the school stories which were written between 1940 and 1960 responded to changes in society and education in much the same way as their Victorian counterparts.

For some critics of children's literature the portrayal of reality and truth in children's stories is a fundamental necessity. For others the 'entertainment' factor should be uppermost in the author's mind, an aspect of the school story which Frank Richards utilised to maximum effect. Using discourse analysis as the basic framework to ascertain the extent to which the school story genre depicted the social inequalities that existed in Britain that existed in Britain between 1940 and 1960 it is necessary to outline the British values and social aspirations of the time. In addition, an examination of the educational system will help to place the novels in the context of the social and educational developments against which the discourse analysis may be measured.

The core of Chapters 5 and 6 will be dedicated to revealing how the authors included reality in their fictional worlds by referring to the language which

"plays a crucial part in that process of *constructing* reality." (Bax, 2011: 30) In this respect the texts will be studied in relation to the contexts in which they are found as an essential dimension in their interpretation. Moreover, the selected school stories will be analysed with reference to their socio-political implications. By this process Chapters 5 and 6 will seek to illustrate to what degree the school story genre reflected not only the changes relating to schools in the post-war era but also the challenges and pressures of Britain's post-industrial society as a whole.

Specifically I will be focusing upon the depiction of British social attitudes that were shaped by the class structure and the restructuring of the British educational system after 1944. Reference will be made to the domestic circumstances of the characters and their relationships with other pupils from different social backgrounds. The preservation of the social hierarchy is an element of the school story which will also be highlighted in this chapter.

In conclusion, the texts explore a variety of situations which are described in both narrative and conversational forms that portray various aspects of social inequalities. The readers of such texts will have come from the whole spectrum of social classes but the appeal of the texts will have been the same, a source of entertainment but with an element of social commentary.

1.2 The British Educational System in the 1940s

By virtue of its setting the school story is inextricably linked with the British educational system in which privilege and inequality abound. In the 1940s it was an established system that manifested class distinction, steadfastly perpetuating the social hierarchy. A contemporary observation was that "the most significant thing about it is that it is not one system, but two, a State

system of public education and a private system of Public education, spelt with a capital to distinguish it from the other." (Williams, 1941: 187) Williams was describing a dichotomy that was to continue beyond 1960. For the politicians and educationists who believed that the nation's education system should be examined to see to what extent there must be change to enable it to sustain and develop the values of a changing society the passing of an Education Act would need to relate the educational process to the social context. It had become an accepted fact that the education beyond the elementary stage was a "privilege to be reserved to the dominant elite – be it of wealth, power, intellect, or whatever else fashion may dictate." (Dent, 1954: 67) As the public schools were a guarantee of social privilege they had already proved to be a practical advantage of a hierarchical society. For the pupils whose parents could afford a private education and a guarantee of social advancement as a result caused other contemporary observers to express their analysis of the situation:

"What is open to criticism is the comparative absence of cross connexions between the different routes, the virtual exclusion of the great mass of pupils in the senior schools from any of them, and the fact that certain of the routes lead more surely and directly than others to social advancement and positions of authority, even apart from any purely *educational* superiority that these more favoured routes may be able to claim. We can hardly continue to contemplate an England where the mass of people coming on by one educational path are to be governed for the most part by a minority advancing along a quite separate and more favoured path." (Clarke, 1940: 44)

The notion that the British educational system in the 1940s was based on a system of 'social castes' is clearly implied when Stead stated his belief that "What exists in England at the moment is a number of distinct systems, each of which is the result of some social and political development." (Stead,

1942: 38) The depiction of such inequality will be brought into focus later in the chapter in order to illustrate how the relationship between divided schools and a divided society became all the more apparent in the school story.

Stead was adamant in his belief that any inequality in the community would be reflected in the inequality in the country's educational system which served that particular society. In this instance "the educational system acts as a reflection of the society, and the good and evil of the latter can be seen in the strong and weak points of the former." (Stead, 1942: 112) Society was especially viewed as a hierarchy in 1940 at a time when the public schools offered an education that was regarded as being socially superior, irrespective of the ability of the child.

The British educational system, heavily influenced by the nature of the nation's capitalist industry, had a profound effect on the parents, pupils and teachers whose educational expectations were shaped by the social relations in which they stood. The social inequalities involving class over class and men over women was sufficient for the Council for Educational Advance to call for "immediate legislation to provide equality for all children, irrespective of the social and economic conditions, in order to equip them for a full life, and for democratic citizenship." (Education Group, 1981: 55) This was the cue for R.A. Butler, the first Minister of Education for England, to bring forward his 1944 Education Act.

1.2.1 The 1944 Education Act

In his desire to revolutionise the educational system Butler's 1944 Education Act addressed the heightened awareness of the weaknesses in the country's educational system and the Act reflected the government's radical reappraisal of the educational changes that needed to be made. Education

and welfare were the two main issues that assumed pivotal roles in political thinking regarding Britain's post-war society.

The main provisions of the Act included the need for each local education authority (LEA) to provide primary and secondary education in a structure that would end the nineteenth century doctrine of separate routes for different social classes. Whereas before the Act secondary education meant, in effect, a grammar school education that was confined to a relatively small number of children, the Act redefined it as the second of three progressive stages; primary, secondary and further. In effect the word 'secondary' now meant a stage of education, not a kind of education. The new tripartite system was to be implemented by each LEA which would provide schools that were "sufficient in number, character, and equipment to afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities, and aptitudes." (Education Act 1944 pp.4 -5) Under the tripartite system the grammar school was destined to become the training ground for the professions, for university, for the administrative and managerial strata in society, once the public schools had taken their pick of talented pupils. The next stratum, the technical high schools, were to cater for foremen or highly skilled workers in the engineering and building trades. The third layer of the system, the secondary modern schools, provided a shorter and less academic course which was taught by a less specialised teaching staff for the great majority of secondary-aged pupils. A system such as this, however, had socially divisive effects on pupils and parents. The depiction of the values shared in the post-war secondary school is explored in Spolton's paper entitled 'The Secondary School in Post-War Fiction' (1963) in which he gives credence to the fact that the 1944 Education Act had a "greater impact on public consciousness than any previous educational legislation." (Spolton,1963:126)

Furthermore, with regard to the fictional representation of the introduction of the tripartite system “it is the failures which have attracted more attention than the successes.” (Spolton,1963:127) The intention of removing some of the stigmas attached to lower-class education and ameliorate social divisions was not entirely met, however. Whereas the educational reforms that were due to take effect from 1945 were to provide a new pattern of opportunity there appeared instead a social cleavage between the different sectors of secondary education. It created a system which encouraged a hierarchical social system and the tradition of segregation that had lingered from the previous century. The raising of the school leaving age to 15 did raise the chances of working-class pupils moving on to further education and increase their opportunities to gain better employment. In general the Act enrolled more working-class children within secondary education and the take-up of children from elementary education to secondary education increased from 15% in 1938-9 to 22% in 1950-51. (McKibbin, 1998: 260) However, entry into grammar school by the 11+ exam still favoured children from predominantly middle-class homes and the relative chances of working-class children gaining entry into such schools was largely unaffected by the educational reforms although it was a fact that many more children from working-class backgrounds went to grammar schools then in their parents’ generation. (McKibben, 1998: 268) The immediate effects of the Act would not be realised until a new generation of children would fully profit from the provisions of the Act. The limited social mobility that was afforded to certain working-class boys and girls was based on the provision of an education that was “appropriate to an occupational hierarchy which required some working-class mobility but nothing more.” (McKibben, 1998: 269) The recommendation of the Fleming Report (1944) was that 25% of a grammar school’s intake should comprise ‘scholarship boys’ with the addition of a small number of girls from the state system although this suggestion had little effect at the time. (Morgan, 1990:41)

In the opinion of one grammar school headmaster, however, the result of the reform six years after its passing “has been to strengthen rather than to eliminate the importance of class in English secondary education, and to deepen the gulf between the state and the independent grammar school.” (Davies, 1950: 5) Whilst the wealthier middle-class parents continued to patronise the public boarding schools the grammar schools tended to serve a working-class and lower middle-class population and helped to provide “the missing cultural background.” (Davies, 1950: 6) They were still widely regarded as the best available instrument open to working-class and lower middle-class boys and girls with intellectual ambitions and would continue the traditional path of social mobility for the talented working-class child.

The importance of the 1944 Act was that it laid the foundations for children to follow a course of education that was better suited to their individual talents and interests. As their academic potential was judged at 11 years of age, however, there was a certain amount of scepticism about whether selection for the grammar schools was valid and this did not really abate until the 11+ examination was largely scrapped in the 1970s to make way for a more nearly universally accepted comprehensive school system. The public and private schools were unaffected by the Act and continued as before, continuing to provide better opportunities to those whose parents could afford it and adopting a more rigorous approach to academic studies on the same lines as its main competitors, the grammar schools. Overall the post-war education system worked hard to inculcate attitudes of loyalty and respect towards those in authority and this was reflected in the school stories whose underlying themes were based on co-existing in a society which had expectations relating to work and acceptance of rules. (Musgrave, 1985: 244) As long as the public boarding schools remained outside the State system of secondary education the 1944 Act was unable to fulfil the explicit intention of the White Paper on Educational Reconstruction, to provide equality of educational opportunity.

The public schools, however, remained the cornerstones of social privilege. Unique to England the schools had always been a “peculiar institution.” (Wiener, 1981: 16) It was seen as an education in isolation from the daily life of society and those outside its walls would question whether it was the appropriate education for future citizens of a social democracy. As early as 1943 R.H. Tawney queried whether “the existence of a group of schools reserved for the children of the comparatively prosperous...is, or is not, as the world is today, in the best interests of the nation. It cannot be decided by the venerable device of describing privileges as liberties.”(Lawson & Silver, 1973: 420) Tawney’s views were also bolstered by the position that the Workers’ Education Association (WEA) adopted who recommended that the public schools be included in a nationwide public system of education which was more in keeping with a modern democratic society. Outsiders of the system believed that the boarding school left with its pupils a sense of apartness from society, a disadvantage which a day school pupil would not suffer. Counter to this argument, however, is the belief that separation from home would encourage pupils to develop independence of outlook and encourage initiative in making decisions affecting themselves and others. Independent of external control the public schools were allowed to continue to be autocratic and aristocratic, reliant upon the educative value of community life. (Hicks, 1933: 6)

A work of fiction can relate certain information about society in that it can inform the reader about such things as technology, laws, customs and social structures. The values and attitudes in the society may also be inferred from the attitudes and behaviour of the fictional characters. It would, however, be unreasonable to assume that we would expect to find in fiction everything in miniature which exists in the society which produces it. The reader has an induced awareness of undergoing the experience he is reading about without believing that the story is not really real. As in any other genre of children’s literature the literary characters personify social norms and values.

The Second World War resulted in the modification but not the destruction of old practices and attitudes in British society. The nation's educational institutions continued to reflect the values and needs of a past age but were powerless to transform society on their own. Education was perceived as being part of society and not as a separate lever by which society could be moved. As a means of change education had proved to be ineffective in reshaping the social order.

1.3 Post –War Society in Britain and British Values in the 1940s

In addition to taking into account the nation's educational system the school story also reflected the social changes that were apparent in British society. This section aims to set out the values of British society that underpinned the attitudes of the social classes during the 1940s. They were fundamental in shaping relationships between the classes which was also reflected in the relationships between the children who had absorbed the attitudes that distinguished the class differences.

One such condition pertaining to the English people as a whole was that of loyalty, the expectation of not letting each other down. The fact that this is demonstrated in various school stories confirms Brogan's view that "the clue to the English attitude to class and social distinction is to be found in the school system. In no other country does the character of the formal education received have the permanent importance that it has in England." (Brogan, 1943: 28) It would appear that the divisive nature of the British education system between the Public and State schools also created a social seam where the public schools met the grammar schools. Whilst the boarding school pupil enjoyed a prestigious education the English lower-class was conditioned to accepting either second or third best. It was a situation whereby the social division was clearly stated by Brogan: "The public-school boy started with a bias in his favour, the outsider with a bias

against him." (Brogan, 1943: 29) It was an image that permeated the school novel of the 1940s and illustrated the social and educational divide in British society.

The values which reflected a sense of 'Britishness' during the 1940s would undoubtedly mean different things for different people but a consensus of such values would have included "a belief in the rule of law, fair play ...'common decency' besides maintaining "a stiff upper lip, slightly conservative, history, old Empire." (*The Author,* 2009: 62) These are certainly elements which appear from time to time in the school stories of that era which underpinned a large section of the middle class sense of Britishness.

The sense of a 'collective responsibility' that took shape during the war greatly affected Britain's society as a whole. (Ryder & Silver, 1970: 151) It was a time to take stock of the educational system that resulted in a radical reappraisal of its weaknesses. Whilst a period of austerity in the war's aftermath did not immediately raise the nation's spirits there was nevertheless a feeling that Butler's 1944 Education Act would be a stepping stone towards a better educated society than ever before. There was a political realisation that education was one of the main instruments for promoting the development of society, that education was an expression of the basic values of society. Socially there was a period of reaction against constraint and control which characterised Britain's emergence from the war. (Ryder & Silver, 1970: 210)

As the nation recovered from the trauma of World War Two several factors played a significant role in achieving a positive social revival: a move towards full employment, social security and economic growth. These factors combined to allow the emergence of an affluent society in addition to contributing towards generally higher educational standards. The question of

organising state secondary education on comprehensive lines had only sporadic support at the end of the war and it would not be until the mid-1950s that the main impetus for comprehensive reorganisation would begin and accelerate following the Labour Party's success in the 1964 General Election. (Briggs, 1983: 298)

By 1950 about 60% of children of professionals and businessmen could expect to win grammar school places compared with almost 10% of working-class children. (McKibben, 1998: 262) These children had a particular advantage over their working-class counterparts owing to their parents enjoying stable employment and being well aware of the grammar schools' position on the 'educational ladder'. Parents who aspired to a better education for their children would, in turn, convey a similar attitude to the children who would aspire to the public school ethos that was conveyed in the school stories of that time. As much of the grammar school ethos was based on the public school traditions such as houses and prefects the public school stories served as an ideal for the student to attain through sport and academic achievement.

By virtue of their limited boundaries with regard to the settings the school story provided a narrow reflection of the past and by 1940 the genre had in effect become a period piece but still retained a relevance and value as a social document. For a child's novel to be regarded as being 'successful' the question of identification is crucial. Although the archetypal characters depicted in the school stories had undergone little, if any, change, the social characters of the readers had. For readers to connect with the text there must be an element of common ground to make the identification possible which will facilitate a 'class-cultural element'. (Rockwell, 1974: 78) By 1940 the reader from a working-class background would find that identification with some of the aristocratic and upper middle class characters would be extremely difficult as there would be insufficient cultural similarity to

sympathise with or understand the literary characters. It was more the idealisation of school life that maintained the reader's interest. By this time Richards had perfected his formula whereby the public school ethos had been distorted into myth and his distillation of the elements of the public school story genre, for good or ill, had affected a whole generation of young working-class readers. (Richards, 1988: 275)

Despite its limitations the school story genre, as an integral part of children's literature, reflected the attitude of the past and was to continue to play its part in informing the reader about changing social conditions.

1.4 Education and Social Opportunity 1940 – 1949

The link between educational opportunities and social change is an inseparable one. In order to accommodate the diversity of talent and ability within a society it is necessary to provide the educational opportunities to develop this. The school story genre often centred around an environment that was largely safe and structured. Rules were set to be abided by and the behaviour of the pupils was constantly monitored as well as depicting class privilege and inherited wealth representing a "sealed, rigidly hierarchical world in which 'normality' is white and middle-class." (Frith, 1985: 115) British society in 1940 was firmly entrenched in its class structure and the social stratification of the nineteenth century was still very much in evidence.

In order to appreciate the process by which various governments addressed the issue of educational opportunities and Britain's society it is necessary to examine the effects of some Education Acts which prompted change for better or for worse. In 1940 T.S. Eliot voiced his opinion on the question of the scope of education by saying that it "is no longer the task of merely training individuals in and for a society, but also the much larger task of training a society itself – without our having any fundamental accepted

principles on which to train it. The scope of education has been rapidly expanding as social organisms have broken down and been replaced by the mechanisation which increases, as it manipulates, the atomisation of the individual." (Times Educational Supplement, March, 1940)

Eliot was voicing the concern of many educationists who felt that the nation's educational system was not only an integral part of the social system but was a main source of its strength or its weakness. For the education to be relevant to the changing needs of society it is necessary for it to be re-examined periodically in relation to the changing social and political order, a task for those in government as well as the educationists.

For the politicians and educationists who believed that the nation's educational system should be examined to see to what extent there must be change to enable it to sustain and develop the values of a changing society the 1944 Education Act went some way to relate the educational process to the social context. It had become an accepted fact that the education beyond the elementary stage was a "privilege to be reserved to the dominant elite – be it of wealth, power, intellect, or whatever else fashion may dictate." (Dent, 1954: 67)

1.5 The School Story and Social Class in the 1940s

The school story novel was able to extend the narrative and develop the characters within a formulaic framework that was both familiar and reassuring to the reader. Whilst some of the more popular novels will be commented upon in the next chapter it is important at this stage to see how the school story served as a literary vehicle for several authors to use their perception of contemporary education and its relationship with society in a fictional form.

Up until 1940 the school story was based on an elite that charted the development of the modern public school from Arnold's Rugby School to the more prosaic setting of Frank Richards' *Greyfriars*. By this stage the genre was endowed with a timeless quality whereby the root of its appeal was that it was fixed firmly in the past. Unlike Hughes' novel in which the tribulations of Tom Brown were based on a real-life system of prefects and fagging and where life could often be a struggle Richards was an author who emphasised that his novels revolving around the antics of Billy Bunter and his compatriots were never more than a reflection of impressions and reactions which did not necessarily reflect current reality. Indeed his readership was based largely on an audience of working-class children who would never go near a public school. What Thomas Hughes achieved with his novel was placing the school at the centre of the novel, "where it was neither an episode nor partial theme," (Hicks,1933: 20) a device that was exemplified by successive writers such as Kipling and Waugh.

By 1940 the public school setting had all the requisite qualities with which to blend fact with fiction although some of the fictional images of the public school in the school story genre had become entrenched in stereotypical fashion. The cries of Bunter yelling "Yaroo!" and "Leggo you beastly cads!" are aligned with Freddie Bartholomew being beaten by Flashman and fags burning toast. Cliched images such as these were sufficient for George Orwell to voice his opinion of the school story in a 1939 publication of *Horizon* and lambast Richards' Greyfriars School as being more representative of Tom Brown's Rugby School than of a modern public school.

In Orwell's England education was often regarded as a matter of status, the most definite dividing line being drawn between the bourgeoisie and the working class in that the former pay for their education. Within the bourgeoisie there exists another unbridgeable gulf between the 'public'

school and the ‘private’ school. The question of image is something that Orwell took great exception to in his analysis of Richards’ Greyfriars, a vulgarized model of a school which was a parody of the public school system which did not even approximate to reality. Whilst the mysticism that surrounded these schools had been violated by writers such as Richards and Gunby Hadeth it was the working-class and lower middle-class reader for whom, according to Orwell, “It is quite clear that there are tens and scores of thousands of people to whom every detail of life at a ‘posh’ public school is wildly thrilling and romantic. They happen to be outside that mystic world of quadrangles and house-colours, but they yearn after it, live mentally in it for hours at a stretch.“ (Orwell, *Horizon* , 1939) The public school characters portrayed in the *Gem* and *Magnet* magazines appeared to be more identifiable than those described by Richards at Greyfriars. The middle-class boy could relate more easily to Tom Redwing, the scholarship boy, who had made the grade and gave hope to those readers from less privileged backgrounds and project themselves into the public school atmosphere. The children’s papers made a significant contribution to a part of the young reader’s social history merely through their entertainment value. (Fraser, 1977: 133)

At a time in the 1930s when the Depression and international politics had encouraged a sense of xenophobia and jingoistic Imperialism influenced the content and values in literature that was offered to the juvenile market, especially to boys, the school story in Richards’ eyes came as a welcome relief. Although the Bunter stories had little to do with real-life boarding school practice in the educational sense the essence of the appeal of the school story in the early 1940s lay in the dream fulfilment of being popular, achieving success in sport or solving a mystery connected with the school or the family.

The repercussions of the 1944 Education Act in relation to the school story were quite radical. By 1945 the boy's public school story genre was beginning to burn itself out and, whilst slowly dying from exhaustion, authors such as Anthony Buckeridge, Geoffrey Trease and Laurence Maynell began to produce more contemporary novels set in state-run day schools. Whilst this development will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter it will be pertinent to mention their relative contribution to the issue of the genre and social class at this stage.

1.6 Novels relating to day-schools

The *Rex Milligan* and *Jennings'* series of novels created by Anthony Buckeridge took into account the changing face of the educational system, as well as social change, in Britain, moving away from the moribund image of the cloistered confines of the boarding school to the day school environment peopled by day pupils who were living 'normal' lives at home surrounded by family and friends. Buckeridge's characters are made up of small boys who are individuals in their own right as well as being given the typical group character which was typified by the traditional prep school stories. As an ex-prep school teacher himself Buckeridge was able to bridge the gap between fiction and reality as his protagonists, like Jennings, were more recognisable figures than his predecessors. By the late 1940s the child reader was wanting a text that would comply with his own experiences and Buckeridge's texts filled that desire.

The dramatisation of grammar schools through the *Bannermere* series of novels by Geoffrey Trease was justified by the author when, in 1948, he propounded that there was "just as much potential drama and infinitely more scope for originality in depicting the life of any day school." (Butts [Ed.],1992: 15) This was stated at a time when the tripartite system of grammar, technical and secondary modern schools was still in its infancy and when the

domain of the public school remained untouched. Trease's own experience as a teacher in a seaside private school would have given him sufficient material on which to base his characters and his desire to give a voice to those from the lower social order was reiterated by his belief that "People don't often put day-schools into stories. Life there is just as interesting as it is at boarding-schools." (Carpenter & Prichard, 1984: 541) Trease's *Maythorn* series was a continuation of school stories with a secondary modern school setting.

Rivalry between schools that reflected social divisions proved to be an irresistible choice of storyline for Laurence Maynell who, in 1947, published his first school story under his pseudonym of Stephen Tring, *The Old Gang*. The novel's subject matter centres on two opposing gangs, one from a grammar school and the other from a neighbouring secondary modern school. Maynell's delineation of realistic characters and his use of authentic dialogue combine to give the novel a sense of realism that some of the more traditional school stories failed to provide.

Fiction can have far-reaching effects on its readership and in this regard Joan Rockwell argues that "it plays a large part in the socialization of infants, in the conduct of politics and in general gives symbols and models of life to the population, particularly in those less-easily defined areas such as norms, values and inter-personal behaviour." (Butts, 1992: 1) The school story, as an example of generic literature, is a prime example of a genre that influenced its readers through the repetitive use of the same elements dating from before 1940 up to 1960. These elements included the enforcing of social norms and the exposing of social deviants, reinforcing and consolidating the ideas and beliefs of society and the interaction between a variety of characters and the situations in which they find themselves.

As a sub-genre of popular fiction the school story, particularly the public school story, could be held up as a mirror of widely held popular views. The theme of the scholarship pupil, for example, was used to explore the emotional dramatic possibilities in the cases of pupils who felt inferior to those whose parents could afford to pay the school fees. Social snobbery was an issue that could be dealt with in a way that dramatised an image of society that readers from a wide cross-section of society could identify with.

1.7 Using the Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) for critical discourse analysis

This section will outline how the theorisation of social class underpins the conceptual framework of critical discourse analysis to allow the reader to assess to what extent the school story depicted certain social inequalities which existed in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. By adhering to the framework that was defined in Chapter One (pp 13-15) I have endeavoured to illustrate the relationship between the texts and the appropriate context in the hermeneutic tradition.

The four stages of the critical discourse analysis of the critical discourse analysis that have been detailed on pages 17-19 form the basis of the analysis of the texts referred to in Chapters Five and Six. In order to avoid repetition it is expedient, therefore, that the dialectal-relational approach be given its appropriate focus.

The first stage relates to the specific social problem on which the thesis converges, that of the socio-economic inequalities that were exacerbated by a system of class stratification. The subculture that was created resulted in the proletarianization of certain sectors of the middle-class and the

occasional embourgeoisement of the working-class following on from the passing of the 1944 Education Act. The topic of educational inequality can be identified in a variety of school stories by which the selective system of education caused “an ability split, and to some extent a class split” in each teenage group. (King, 1969:39) In this respect the analysis is limited to the family and education as “class acts crucially on all agencies of cultural reproduction and therefore on *both* the family and the school.” (Bernstein, 1977:27) The corollary of Bernstein’s argument is that working-class children were crucially disadvantaged, particularly as the school is regarded as a microcosm of society and, in turn, a divisive principle of social organization as “the ideologies of education are still the ideologies of class.”(Bernstein, 1977:124) In this regard it will become apparent that the public school story portrayed the ruling class as being essentially concerned with the systematic relation between education and the maintenance of the class basis of the social relations of production.

In acknowledging that social mobility, social change and education are interrelated, whereby education has a direct relationship with the pace of social change and the extent of social mobility, the school story serves to underline the orthodox Marxist notion of class consciousness, a social segregation that mirrors that in the world outside school. The class system of the 1940s and 1950s, as Reeves argues, engendered a “general revulsion of feeling against inequalities of class, wealth and privilege” in addition to the recognition that “a false hierarchy of privilege which gives one child a better chance than another is manifestly unfair.” (Reeves, 1946:44)

The analysis of specific linguistic references will also underpin Bernstein’s assertion that social class “affects the classification and framing of the elaborated code transmitted by the school”, resulting in an “unequal distribution of privileging principles of communication.” (Bernstein, 1990:118) As the analysis of language, both spoken and written, is central to the critical

discourse analysis it is also important to allude to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, a cultural grammar specialized by class position. It is particularly relevant in instances pertaining to the lifestyles of families which are related to their class position. The preservation of status culture through private education which was regarded by the middle-class as an essential priority would be less important for working-class families although education would be used by the more ambitious to change the class situation of their children.

Stage Two of the discourse analysis will concern itself with the identification of the obstacles to addressing the social and educational equalities that have been discussed in Stage One. The procedure will focus on the dialectal relations between semiosis and other social elements in accordance with Saussure's interpretation that "a language...is a social institution...a system of signs expressing ideas." (Sebeok, 2001:131) Within this particular section of the analysis I will be referring to semiotics as the communication of a point of view through the combination of bodily gestures and words, looking at the issue of social inequality as a key aspect of human experience.

The third stage will consider the legitimacy of social and educational inequality within the social order of Britain in the 1940s and 1950s. The recognition by the Spens Report (1938), for example, that secondary education was suffering from a lack of genuine educational diversity being based on a model of public and grammar schools reflected social privilege rather than educational virtue. The issue of a school's social status based on its social composition was an added consideration with regard to the prospect of social mobility by helping its pupils to enter occupations that were superior in status to those of their fathers. This was certainly applicable to the public schools whose continued existence was "an indication of the way in which parts of the existing school system reflect a society in which there was little or no mobility through education, as they continue, unlike the modern grammar school, to only confirm the status of most of their pupils."

(King, 1969:159) In this respect the particular relations of power and domination linked with the Marxist ideology will be explored using extracts from the texts.

Having explored the more negative aspects of the social and educational inequalities the analysis will enter its fourth and final stage as it moves from the negative to a positive critique. This will centre on how the obstacles were addressed on a political level to lessen the social wrongs that have been highlighted in the previous stages.

1.7.1 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage One

The specific social problem to which I wish to allude is that of the divisiveness of the class system which permeated British society in the 1940s and how the school story depicted the social stratification shown by the pupils', and teachers', attitudes to those who came from outside the private education sector. Angela Brazil, whose personal attitude to school was markedly shaped by her own experiences and that of her mother, wrote *The New School at Scawdale* (1940), a novel which reflected the author's belief that "day- girls were to her mind inferior to boarders, a prejudice she never overcame." (Freeman, 1976:34)

As a pupil at the Preparatory High in Greenhayes, on the outskirts of Manchester, Brazil's burgeoning snobbery is illustrated by her biographer's assertion that she "revelled in the ambience and appurtenances of a 'proper' school, but there was no one she felt able to ask home for tea. One detects the limits of snobbishness which sowed the seeds of Angela's own." (Freeman, 1976: 47) Furthermore, Frith would argue that Brazil's stories were based on her fantasy of the schools she *wished* she had attended. To add to the accusations of snobbery Brazil also "had the unquestioning

acceptance of the class structure, the jingoistic patriotism." (Sims & Clare, 2000: 67)

Bearing in mind some of the above observations of Brazil's attitude to her own schooldays and her views of the social order of Britain in the 1940s her novels have a tendency to promote class distinction even within the same school. Her personal experience of boarding at the fairly exclusive Ellerslie in her later adolescence gave her the credentials to create stories involving exclusively girls' boarding schools. Brazil's disapprobation of day-girls is acknowledged by her biographer when she confirms that "Day-girls were to her mind inferior to boarders, a prejudice she never overcame." (Freeman, 1976:34) This is reflected when Violet, a pupil at Thorghyl Hall, informs the Head girl, Isolda, of an impending increase in the pupil roll:

Violet: "I hear four day-girls are coming, and some of them are about our own age."
Isolda: "Day-girls! Did I hear you say *day-girls*?"
"We've never had day-girls before."
"I can't say I like the idea – day-girls!"
"We needn't speak to them out of school need we?"
Violet: "Oh, look here!" interposed Violet. "Let's be nice to them! After all, they can't help being day girls. It's rather rough on them to make up our minds beforehand to boycott them, isn't it?"
Alice: "They *may* be quite nice." Alice's tone was not too encouraging.
(pp. 150 – 151)

This short snippet of conversation is suitably illustrative of Brighouse's argument that "a society which ensures that its elite will have no contact with those they serve from an early age corrodes social solidarity," (Brighouse, et al., 2010:22) in that the boarders brought their social class values into school with them in addition to other aspects of their subjectivities.

The fact the girls eventually became boarders does not condone Brazil's snobbish attitude towards day-school pupils. It is also apparent that Brazil's

resentment of her real-life schools for failing to provide ‘jolly times’ (Freeman, 1976: 25) is lifted in her fictional schools. On the occasion when Trixie organised an impromptu radio broadcast to cheer up the girls it was not necessarily appreciated by some of the boarders:

“They don’t appreciate Trixie here,” burst out Aileen indignantly. “She’s a live wire, cleverer than any of them, and they know it.”
“I guess they’re jealous.”
“She was appreciated at Astley High!”
“Yes, indeed. I often wish we were back there.”
“So do I.”
“We had lots of fun and jolly stunts at the old High School.” (pp. 261 – 262)

Apart from the reference to ‘jolly stunts’ the reader is given an indication that admittance to a boarding school wasn’t necessarily based on academic ability but more on one’s social standing. The clear indication of jealousy of Trixie’s innate intelligence reflects the fact that that those who benefitted from private education were almost invariably from privileged backgrounds and who “more through luck and environment than natural endowment” (Calvocoressi, 1978:157) were in a better position to be part of an educational system which served the elite. Even though friendships were forged following a rather frosty reception and the State schools, namely the High school and the Grammar school, were intending to reopen in January the stigma of being a State pupil within a boarding school setting was reinforced at the end of the novel:

“I wish you were all coming with us to Astley High!” said Winnie impulsively. But her suggestion was received with such scorn that she felt squashed. Evidently the girls much preferred their own boarding school, whether it was at Uplands or at Thorghyl Hall. (p. 267)

The reinforcement of the notion that State education was a second-best option suitable for lower middle-class pupils is also present in Brazil’s next novel, *The Mystery of the Moated Grange* (1942). The theme of evacuation was a convenient vehicle to use once again whereby Captain Bevan’s

children, two girls and a boy, were destined to join 60 girls and staff from a large girls' High school and a local Grammar school respectively. Although the son, Arthur, declared that the Grammar school "did not appear to come up to the standard of the previous school" (p.30) his sister Hilda was more than happy to attend a boarding school:

"I always said I'd like to go to a boarding school and yet I don't want to leave home, but when it's both combined and Mum's thrown into the bargain, well, it seems to me jolly good." (p.11)

As Hilda's family had taken over Maenan Grange in Herefordshire where the 60 girls were to be relocated she had found herself in an advantageous situation in which she could experience the full benefits of a family life and a boarding school education. For Miss Brookes, the Headmistress, "The Grange was to be her ideal boarding school, where she could try out psychological methods such as she had lately studied at an educational conference, and for which there had been small chance to experiment at a day school." (p.36)

The juxtapositioning of private with State education in this short extract illustrates Brazil's consistent portrayal of the private system's implied educational and social superiority. This was bolstered by Brazil's allusion to the school hierarchy in which the Upper Seniors rather "kept themselves to themselves. Though most of them were little more than a year older than the Lower Seniors they felt in a superior position." (p.126) Whilst the issue of prefects and their status in the school's hierarchical structure plays an integral role in the boarding school story the reader is presented with further evidence that the selected few would be put in an elevated position for others to emulate. This will be discussed further in a later section.

The third Brazil novel, *Three Terms at Uplands* (1945), unashamedly employs language that acclaims the private school system.

Brother and sister, Colin and Claire, were orphaned 8 years earlier when their parents were killed in a car crash in Mexico. In the aftermath of the tragedy their grandfather “realized that the two children must be brought up and well educated.”(p.14) Despite his modest financial resources the grandfather wished to send Colin to his *alma mater,* St Keith’s College in Westmorland, a well-known public school. Although the Scholarship would only cover part of the fees Claire, a pupil at a branch of the Monkaster High School, proclaimed her underlying jealousy:

“I wish *I* could go to a big boarding school”, murmured Claire plaintively. (p.15)

As an ex-grammar school pupil Colin, in Claire’s eyes, was destined to attend a school that would far exceed his expectations. Just the facilities alone would combine to provide a sound basis for a superior education to follow on from what he had previously enjoyed. Claire, too, was given the opportunity to be admitted to Uplands School, a girls’ boarding school. A tour around the school was sufficient to whet the appetite for a boarding school education.:

‘They [Claire and Aunt Dorothy] were conducted into a large hall...then saw through many classrooms and a finely equipped gymnasium, went upstairs to a selection of dormitories, and downstairs again to recreation rooms, went outside for a brief glimpse at autumnal gardens and a swimming pool, peeped into the private chapel to admire a stained-glass window lately added, and finally hurried back into a drawing-room where some tea was waiting.” (p.50)

For Claire Uplands represented the fulfilment of a childhood wish whilst for Aunt Dorothy the pride in her niece was unmistakable:

“It all seems very nice,” commented Dorothy. “I’m sure Claire will be happy her. She’s a fortunate girl to have won the Scholarship.” (p.50)

However, the gaining of a Scholarship was not everything. Claire's school friend, Ethel, was jealous of her success but felt that her father could comfortably afford the fees if necessary. In her conversation with Claire, Ethel almost devalues Claire's academic ability:

"Somehow a scholarship girl is always a little at a disadvantage."
"How?"
"Well, has to work extra hard to make up for it. And it rather labels her in the school." (p.33)

The use of the word 'labels' is suggestive of the class divide, between those whose parents could afford the full fees and those who were dependent on their child gaining a scholarship to enable them to pay reduced fees. As both Ethel and Claire were former pupils at the High School they were both in a position to share their views about Uplands in comparison to the High. Once again Brazil presents to the reader a vision of two quite distinct worlds, the contrast being brought into sharp focus:

"On the whole it's pretty much like the old High!" commented Ethel reflectively.
"Yes, but there's a something –" ventured Claire.
"I know", nodded Ethel, "what dad called culture!"
"They're certainly particular about slang, agreed Claire.
"Yes, at a day school you do as you like outside, if you know what I mean, but in a boarding school you're here all the time and you have to catch – what shall I call it?"
"The atmosphere of the place?"
"That's it. Dad said I should put on a polish at Uplands." (p.56)

The use of speech "remains the great divider between class and class" (Hicks, 1933: 7) and it would be difficult to disagree with this in the context of the inferred cultural division between the state and private education systems.

The references to ‘culture’, ‘polish’ and ‘atmosphere’ reinforce the impression that the boarding school provided a sanctuary, an educational oasis where the pupils could imbibe a piece of English tradition which would separate them from their State school contemporaries. The fact that Claire’s scholarship had allowed her to experience a boarding school education which thrived on tradition and the continuation of established routines and systems such as Houses and Prefects was sufficient for her to conclude that “on the whole she had enjoyed it, and was glad she had won the Scholarship.” (p.87) The winning of the Scholarship, in Claire’s mind, had enabled her to be “received on terms of equality, and even of friendship with a few.” (p.96) However, the equality that the scholarship seemingly brought was threatened by the ill health of Claire’s grandfather. Due to financial constraints he was unable to contemplate retirement as an option and an underlying inequality suddenly surfaced when his daughter, Dorothy, explained to Claire that the education of her brother Colin would have to take priority. It was a situation that would have been met by many families throughout Britain in which the sons’ education would take precedence over the daughters’. Dependency upon financial security was a fact of life which Claire acknowledged with understandable distaste:

“Horrid money!” she exploded. “How I hate it!! Why couldn’t the Scholarship cover the fees? It wasn’t fair to give it to me without.

She did not grudge him the preference. The one boy left in the family had an expectation to be educated at the old school where his father and grandfather had been pupils. Despite this Victorian attitude Claire’s loyalty to her brother was sufficient for her to acquiesce and give way to his increased opportunity for social advancement. (pp.124-125) In this instance Brazil conjures up a scenario that not only illustrated the furthering of male dominance in British society but also the sense of family ‘loyalty’, a deep-seated value of Britain during the 1940s.

Angela Brazil died on 12 March, 1947, “living to see victory in the Second World War but not the disappearance of the safe, middle-class world which had sheltered both her and her fictional schoolgirls for so long.” (Sims & Clare, 2000: 67) Her legacy to the history of the school story in particular was the portrayal of the boarding school as an attractive and ideal place where girls would like to be and where the upper middle-class girl would feel at ease with her peers.

1.7.2 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage Two

This section of the analysis will focus on the linguistic/semiotic aspects in which conversations between individuals will be analysed with regard to the specific identities they assume and the emotional responses they make. In addition I will consider any beliefs and motives that will frame a particular situation as it develops dynamically as all these elements are semiotic in nature in that prevailing values are being applied.

The linguistic/semiotic data on which I have based my analysis is essentially in a written format. As the main aim of the critical discourse analysis is to investigate social inequality and social conflict in the Marxian tradition I have attempted to detect its linguistic manifestations in specific elements of dominance. It is central to Marx’s method as “language is the only way we have of grasping the diachronic of changing social circumstances.” (Fairclough, 2010:316) Critical discourse analysis provides an element of interactional analysis which focuses on linguistic features such as time, tense and syntax. The key components of this stage of the analysis are concerned with the implications and allusions contained in the text in addition to asking what concept of society does the text presuppose and convey. In assessing the overall message of the text extracts the interpretations of single aspects will be combined to make a total interpretation of the texts in Chapter 7, the concluding chapter. It should be stated at this point that “critical discourse analysis is not a rigid formula that can be followed mechanically to produce

results" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009:56) although its components for analysis are the most suitable for the analysis of the school story texts as it focuses not just upon semiosis as such but on the relations between semiotic and other social elements. The reference to semiosis in the analysis is appropriate in that it is influenced by the habitus and the relation of the school story to its social context.

The value of loyalty is one that runs through many of the public school stories and World War Two provided an ideal situation for writers of the school story to reiterate the theme of loyalty to one's school and country. Gunby Hadath, the author of *Grim and Gay, The Story of a School which stayed Put* (1942), was a graduate of Peterhouse College, Cambridge, with a Classical Tripos MA degree. His teaching experience before becoming a full-time writer included Bertram Bennett's Preparatory School in Devon before taking up the position of Senior Classical Master at Guildford Grammar School, Surrey. (Kirkpatrick, 2000: 146)

Mr Manny, the oldest member of staff at Cliffeborough School, epitomises the loyal teacher who, despite an air raid on the school, was adamant in his wish that the school would not close and the pupils not to be evacuated. Hadath's emotive portrayal of loyalty and tradition is clearly expressed in the following passage:

'For Manny was a man who lived in the Past. To him Cliffeborough with its tradition and venerable buildings was linked with the heroes of old who had trodden its quadrangles, those whose names were inscribed in letters of gold on its Honours Boards, whose achievements were written amply in their country's history. He had little use, Manny would say, for the new generation. Irreverent, he dubbed it. Too fond of amusement, too self-conscious, too self-assured.' (pp.17-18)

Within this extract it is possible to discern several aspects of social change combined with a respect for the past. The reference to ‘traditions’ and ‘heroes of old’ represent aspects of the public school system whose reputation, and for many, its attraction, lay with what had gone on before. The ‘quadrangles’ and ‘Honours Boards’ stand out as essential elements of the public school aura of exclusiveness and academic achievement which combined to make the school an unobtainable goal for the reader of such novels who came from a lower middle- and working-class background.

Manny’s damning indictment of the new generation passing through the school’s portals is particularly telling as he, like other masters from a different generation, sees his time at the school drawing to a close.

The disparity between the schools in the State system, let alone between the State and Public sectors, is further examined in Chetham-Strode’s play *The Guinea- Pig – A Play in Three Acts* (1946). Although this text is not written in a novel format I have chosen to include it as it convincingly portrays the social divisiveness between the public school system and the State system.

The play is based on the principle of the Fleming Report that was published in 1944. The Committee led by Lord Fleming had been set up at the request of the public schools themselves, who were conscious of the social changes taking place and anxious not to be isolated. It was a time when ‘the trend of social development is leaving the Public Schools out of alignment with the world in which they exist.’ (Maclure, 1986: 210-11) The committee’s recommendation was for public schools to allow 25% of their places to be filled by pupils from primary schools and to provide bursaries based on an income scale. ‘The principle upon which the Fleming scheme was based – a free choice, uninfluenced by financial considerations – was never accepted, largely because the local education authorities were unable to reconcile the big difference between the cost of educating a pupil at a maintained secondary school and at a public boarding school. (Maclure, 1986: 212)

Reference to the Fleming Report (1944) is made in the play when Nigel Lorraine BA concedes that the conclusions of the Report are pretty sound and that “criticism against Public Schools is largely due to ignorance.” (p.13) Furthermore, Chetham-Strode was probably speaking for the great percentage of British people in 1946 when Lorraine suggests that “our critics think that we breed snobs and encourage class distinctions. But the Committee have set out the advantages of the system very fairly, I think...Advantage of a boarding school, the team spirit, our religious life, the standard of education – and all that.” (p.13)

Lloyd Hartley MA, a colleague of Lorraine’s and a Housemaster, takes the opposite view and expresses his alarm at the proposal of 25% of places being set aside for the more capable primary school-leavers. “Think of it...snotty-nosed little ragamuffins from Poplar and Stepney and the slums of Manchester coming to Saintbury to learn to be gentlemen – and at the expense of the taxpayer, mark you.” (p.13) Added to this expression of total denial that ever a scheme could be successful Hartley questions the likelihood of social cohesion when he asks: “How are you going to mix a boy whose father is a General, with a boy whose parents keep a grocer’s shop in Pimlico? And if they did mix at school, would the grocer’s boy be happy in the holidays? And what about his accent? If a Cockney boy went home talking like boys talk here, the whole street would set on him. His life would become a perfect misery.” (p.13)

Chetham-Strode has juxtaposed an enlightened Lorraine with a dissident Hartley, the latter probably speaking for the vast majority of public schoolteachers. The images of various social classes being taught under the same roof, much as the grammar schools were expected to do, was as abhorrent to Hartley as it was a professional challenge to Lorraine. The unbending of Lloyd Hartley’s conservatism could not have contrasted more with Lorraine’s socialistic views.

Hartley's bias against the admittance of a working-class pupil to Saintbury is challenged further when the Headmaster, Dennis Stringer MA, admits Read, the son of a Walthamstow tobacconist. Stringer's principle of taking in boys with good brains, regardless of whether their fathers are lorry drivers or lords, earns a speedy riposte from Hartley who asks "But how do you expect to keep up the *tone* of a place like this?" (p.44) When Read is later seen with a girl from the girls' school in Barton Woods it is sufficient for the bigoted Hartley to declare that "He comes from a slum and he's got a mind like a slum...I don't intend to have any more boys like Read in my House – and the Ministry of Education can go to the devil." (p.44) Hartley is certainly not the only master with such bigoted convictions as his colleague, Grimmett, puts forward a rather unconvincing argument when he declares that he doesn't "think any of us are snobs, Lorraine, but the fact *does* remain - that you can't make silk purses out of pigs' ears." (p.47) Whilst the Headmaster continues to make a success of the situation with "our minds unclouded by prejudice" (p.59) it is Read's father who is finally convinced that Saintbury is the right school for his son when he reaches an ironical conclusion that "this kind of school doesn't only go in for education...The one thing what counts in life, as I've learned it, is character." (p.63) The final word of his statement, 'character', is exactly what the advocator of a public school education extolled.

Sometimes the forming of one's character would come at a cost, however, depending on the strength of the individual in the competitive world of the school. The recognition of a pecking order within the school, particularly a public school, was fundamental to a pupil's survival. The social hierarchy that was based on an individual's family background and innate ability to promote oneself was equally as important, if not more so than academic success.

1.7.3 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage Three

This stage will concern itself with the question of whether the aspects of social and educational inequality is inherent in the social order and how the images of power and domination are perceived from a class structural perspective. There is widespread recognition from Marxists that property, authority and expertise are critical structuring devices in producing social division. The economic inequality shown by the comparative poverty of the lower middle-class contrasted with the wealth of the capitalist class during the 1940s had social ramifications that can be seen in a cross-section of school stories. The sons of the more privileged social classes, for example, are key indicators that a public school education afforded the prerogative to a useful rite of passage that would be emulated in the corridors of power in Westminster in later years.

In Browne's novel, *Fortescue of the Fourth* (1945) Fortescue certainly has a head start as he is described as being 'tall and straight, with fair hair and clear-cut, aristocratic features. He also had an indefinable air of assurance.' (p.5) A profile such as this obviously places the protagonist in a favourable position for social advancement in the school. His nemesis, Devereux, feels confident enough to make an assessment of Fotescue's father by insinuating that he was a "fat, greasy financier, or something – one of those City magnates who pull all sorts of crooked wires." (p.105) It is only when Fortescue's real identity is discovered that it is revealed that his father is in fact the Earl of Datchett, a former Minister of Agriculture in the previous Government. In addition, Fortescue's (Dillbury) father is a 'big land-owner...in Suffolk.' (p.114)

Credentials such as these, however, are insufficient to impress individuals such as Pirbright who coolly admits to Sheptonbridge School having a marquis and a couple of baronets, to say nothing of a foreign prince. His insouciance with regard to the subject of titles is summarily dismissed by

saying that “titles don’t mean a thing. Surely you know that? I’d almost forgotten Dillbury *was* a viscount.” (p.114) Such a disinterested attitude to Fortescue’s background, however, was not adopted by Devereux and Hepworth as the author informs the reader that:

‘...the title had done it. Devereux and Hepworth were, above all else, snobs of the first water...Quite apart from the fact that he had plenty of money, it would be nice to be able to brag that Lord Dillbury was their bosom chum.’ (p.117)

Social conventions such as this would have been just as prevalent in the adult world, however. In this respect the establishment of social networks to further one’s own social mobility was an accepted feature of the public school system. This is illustrated by Coddington’s admission near the end of the story whilst in conversation with Devereux:

Devereux: “When you’ve influence you can do anything – or pretty nearly anything.”

Coddington: “Pity I didn’t know about it before, [Fortescue being a viscount] said Algy Coddington, with regret. “May not be too late, even now. I mean to say, a fellow like that is worth cultivating. I’m not a snob – heaven forbid! – but I mean to say, a dashed lord! After all, we haven’t got many titled chaps at Whitelands.” (p.151)

It is a conversation that reflects the basic principles of false friendships based solely on one’s social standing. The faint-hearted admission of not being a snob clearly indicates Coddington’s ability of convincing his peers whilst retaining some hope of gaining Fortescue’s friendship for his own self-advancement. The author’s previous experience as a substitute writer for the Greyfriars stories for the Magnet in 1913 would have put him in a strong position to conjure up convincing scenarios such as this.

Billy Bunter's efforts at gaining social parity with his more illustrious Greyfriars peers often led to disastrous consequences as was more often than not a victim of his own deceit. His declaration that his family grew "peaches, and all sorts of things, at Bunter Court" (*Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School*, 1947 p.101) together with vast vineries and peacheries was a hopeless attempt to convince his peers of family wealth. His constant waiting for the odd postal order for a few pounds to come through the post would show this to be just fantasy. In conversation with Peter Todd, Bunter continued the theme of wealth and prosperous living:

"I'll take you to Bunter Court some day, Peter, and let you see how wealthy people live. You'd like that, Peter. Open your mind a bit, after your humble home in Bloomsbury. Wealth and luxury, and all that, you know." (pp.137-8)

At this point Bunter is so immersed in self-delusion that it would appear to be his final attempt at gaining a friend through deception. Bunter recognises the kudos that are earned by having a title or, in Huree Jamset Ram Singh's case, coming from noble stock in India. Students such as Lord Mauleverer would be entitled to have sole use of a study, a study that was 'generally a land flowing with milk and honey' and where he could often be 'reclining gracefully on his study sofa'. (p.47) Money and the acquisition of material goods may have proved to be a popular method of securing one's place on the social hierarchy within the school setting.

The language in each of the texts could be interpreted as being provocative in that the situations which included interaction between characters gave a clear indication of social inequalities. This may have included choices that affected educational opportunities, such as a boy's education at a public school taking precedence over a girl's due to financial constraints or the need to imagine one's family having more financial resources than it really had in order to impress one's peers. Daphne, in Blyton's *Second Term at Malory Towers*, is a prime example of this when she admits to being a thief

and a cheat and condones her actions by admitting “I pretended my people were very rich.” (p.167) The messages that such texts would transmit to its readers could be considered as being thought-provoking alongside their entertainment value. Each character had their part to play in order to portray personal injustices with which the reader could identify or sympathise.

Each of the texts that have been analysed in this chapter is representative of the school story genre. It is a genre that is eminently suited to eliciting aspects of British family life in the 1940s and the changes in the education system that affected families from all the social classes.

The core features of the texts published during the Second World War highlighted the class discrimination that was keeping education from those children who were entitled to it. This is shown to some extent in *The Guinea Pig* although Brazil’s novels exhibited class discrimination with a more social bias towards perpetuating ‘the old school tie’ approach to gaining educational favours.

The intertextual links that are particularly significant relate to issues such as ‘loyalty’ and ‘hierarchy’ which were school-based but were just as applicable to the adult world. Whilst the children referred to in the texts showed different levels of tolerance to the social hierarchy within their respective schools their attitudes to privilege varied according to the author. Brazil’s portrayal of a dominant middle-class can be compared to the emergence of a more empowered lower middle- and working-class in Tring’s *The Old Gang.* The traditional grammar school was now in competition with the newer schools built in the latter part of the 1940s. Loyalty to one’s school, moreover, is a factor that is endemic in the school story genre. It is a value that is promoted in the texts as being of central importance for social cohesion and is only questioned by a minority of individual characters for dramatic effect.

1.7.4 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage Four

The main obstacle to a political solution to ameliorate the social divisions of British society in the 1940s was the firm entrenchment of the upper class in its defence of privilege and access to the higher echelons of social inclusivity. Family wealth and direct access to a private and public school education had sustained the upper classes for decades and its reluctance to lessen its superiority within the class system. The sense of class belonging formed the basis of class conflict in British society that no political party could satisfactorily appease although the Fleming Report (1944) and Butler's Education Act (1944) made some attempt to encourage social mobility through access to better educational opportunities, thus endosing meritocratic values and an acknowledgement of the virtue of hard work, ambition and educational excellence. These are the same qualities that Brazil and Chetham-Strode would weave into their novels and, in doing so, implied that class is embedded in such virtues.

The allusion to various conversational texts in this chapter has highlighted the socio-political events that affected education and social change which was a direct result of the Second World War and government education policies. Chetham-Strode's play, for instance, was important for its social content; the socialistic comments of Lorraine contrasting with Lloyd Hartley's conservatism.

The Guinea Pig, especially, proves to be a text which conveys the sense that the public school was a real community that was caught up in a political tug-of-war situation between the private and state sector with neither side gaining from the recommendations of the Fleming Report. The question posed by H.C.A. Gaunt of Malvern College in the Foreward to the play is very relevant to asking what the play aimed to achieve: ' Are some of us ...ignorant of the needs and aspirations of other people who have a different

experience of life?' It is a question that is left unanswered in the play but one which could be considered by a reader of the text.

As the texts were published during the 1940s it is plausible to assume that they encapsulated certain aspects of British society with a socio-political basis. The novels of Enid Blyton that were referred to in the chapter were chosen for their characterisation and sense of reality with the straightforward moral message of positive behaviour being rewarded and negative behaviour being sanctioned. Such stories were bereft of any socio-political underpinnings but it is interesting to note that her *Naughtiest Girl* stories may have been influenced by her interest in co-ed boarding schools and the educational theories of A.S. Neill. (Sims& Clare, 2000: 59) The socio-political underpinning of *The Guinea Pig* is quite evident, however. Depending on which 'side' the reader is more sympathetic, the private or state sector, the play is a powerful example of a text which examines a political proposal (The Fleming Report, 1944) which is put to the test in a setting that explores social consequences. In his attempt to run away from the public school Read condones his actions by saying, "They're a load of snobs, all of them...dirty swine." (p.25) The educational ideology which the text also brings into question has the desired effect of the reader questioning the nature of a public school education and its potential of educating pupils from different social backgrounds.

The consequences of the Second World War with regard to changes in Britain's society were manifold. With the loss of an Empire and a move away from imperialism the impact on the nature of the school story was also evident. By the beginning of the war the school story had reached its zenith in terms of its popularity. The combination of the challenges of changing attitudes and a new social order in 1945, however, made a noticeable impression on the image of the school story as a genre as there was a move away from stories being centred around public schools to be focused on state schools which had the advantage of attracting a wider contemporary

readership. In many ways the genre continued to develop stories that were woven around characters and situations that mirrored contemporary developments in society and changes in the educational system.

The new social order which followed in the wake of World War Two was propelled by the middle class who were seen to determine the destiny of a post industrial society which gathered pace in the 1950s. This situation contrasted sharply with the industrial working classes who had been a distinctive driving force behind social change in the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. During the post-war period of economic nationalism it was undoubtedly the middle class which benefitted from the expansion of the welfare state and the opportunities afforded by the establishment of comprehensive education. (Simon & Taylor, 1981: 77)

Social mobility and its link with education was an inescapable factor that dominated the aspirations of the upper and middle classes but had less effect with the working-class population. There was a much closer correlation between measured ability as a result of the 11+ examination and entry into grammar school after 1944 which favoured the child from a middle-class home. The working-class child made very few inroads into the grammar school system through the awarding of free places as the proportion of working-class children through this entry was no higher in 1950 than it was in 1914. (McKibben, 1998: 260) In this respect the changes in the educational system post-1945 did not significantly improve the relative chances of a working-class boy or girl reaching its socially or academically superior levels, at least not at first. In many respects the educational system that existed in Britain at that time proved to be more of an obstacle course which continually eliminated working-class children except those who proved they were fit to be co-opted into the middle-class grammar school.

As an instrument for the preservation and enrichment of social values education is the means by which we can instil in successive generations the values we have deliberately chosen as expressing the central ideals of our way of life. The social chasm that existed between the public school pupil and the day pupil at a secondary modern school was exacerbated by the qualities which the boarding school developed in relation to its own close-knit community, but which by its very isolation prevented its pupils from acquiring in relation to society as a whole. As the 1940s unfolded the educational issues that continued to dominate the educational and political scene continued from earlier decades and centred on the relationship between education and the population, education and the dominant social values and education and social background and social status.

The place of the day school in school stories certainly gained more prominence after 1944. If a novel can be regarded in a measure as a mirror of social life and the vast majority of pupils receive secondary education at a day school it was surprising how the day school was constantly having to fight for recognition and status in the school story genre. Authors such as Hildick and Trease attempted to rectify the imbalance by basing their novels on contemporary day schools whilst some authors such as Mayne and several writers of girls' school stories continued to base their stories in the traditional public schools. The school story could be regarded as a genre whose writers took cognizance of the social and educational changes which occurred in the decades from 1940 to 1960. Whilst the stories themselves were not necessarily a mirror reflection of the changes that have been discussed in the chapter they have nonetheless used elements of the shift from the public school setting to that of the state day schools. The upper class characters that dominated the earlier novels had been displaced by the more recognisable characters of the modern housing estates and the social problems that pervaded their lives.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has examined the theme of class in the school story and the relevant issues of the cultural differences between the social classes during the 1940s. Within the chapter I have attempted to elicit the various ways by which the authors employed a fictional format to present convincing scenarios to illustrate how the class system was represented within the realms of the British educational system with particular emphasis on the private schools.

One of the ways was the elucidation of the true to life sparring between the grammar school and secondary modern school pupils in which aspects of class consciousness were portrayed by taunts and general intimidating behaviour. Even within the private school system Brazil's reference to a social hierarchy that was based on whether a pupil was a day-girl or boarder illustrated divisions within a single stratum of the education system. Similarly, the manner in which Scholarship pupils were castigated by the full fee-paying pupils supports the view that the diversity of the middle-class identity was endemic in Britain's private school system.

The debate surrounding the issue of class has particular resonance in Great Britain generally but especially in England. Glass' study relating to class analysis and social mobility opined that the triple requisites of "hard work, effort and talent" (Savage, 2000:73) – similar attributes that were propounded in the school stories written by such novelists as Brazil, Blyton and Gunby Hadath. By adopting a positive work ethic and gaining the necessary educational qualifications one could assume that a working-class child would have the same opportunity of social mobility as that of a pupil from a middle-class background. It would have been a supposition, however, that would have been based on a false premise as there was a marked tendency for middle-class children to out-perform their working-class

counterparts owing to the differing cultures of the two classes. This was the essence of Bourdieu's treatise on cultural capital whereby educational inequality was created when the children of 'cultured' parents were better disposed in converting their inherited cultural capital into worthwhile educational qualifications. The diversity of economic and cultural resources limited the extent by which working-class children were able to compete with the middle-class children for a suitable education in their pursuit of status and class interests.

The limited accessibility of a worthwhile education to the working-classes and the sense of privilege and exclusivity that is apparent in the language spoken by the girl boarders of Brazil's novels and Browne's *Fortescue of the Fourth* (1945) gives credence to Clarke's contemporary view concerning public school education in that "to continue it [public school education] against all the forces that are coming into play will both intensify social conflict and weaken the power of Britain to co-operate with the other free peoples of the world, even with those in the British Commonwealth." (Clarke, 1940:57) Social cohesion was a major political concern in the 1940s in which education was regarded as helping to provide for its cohesion and continuance. Class was of significance to the sociologist because of its association with educational attainment. On reading the public school story the reader is able to visualise the extent by which the British public school system is a system for generating *social types.* The public school story, even in children's literature, represented the realities of power and social status as the characters who made up the English class structure in a range of novels retained their robust grip on the higher levels of the British establishment.

With regard to the linguistic/semiotic analysis of the school story published in the 1940s one must allude to Chetham-Strode's *The Guinea Pig* (1946) in order to appreciate how signification allowed the reader to interpret the endorsement of social inequality. From a Marxist perception the author is the

'representative' of a class (Williams, 1977:196) and the bourgeois ideology that is disseminated by Hartley's reference to "snotty-nosed little ragamuffins from Poplar and Stepney and the slums of Manchester" (p.13) communicates a message which belittles the social value of the working-class culture. For Read's father to acknowledge the public school's role in shaping his son's 'character' clearly substantiates Brogan's argument that "the standard schoolmaster and the standard parent knew what they wanted; the father paid the school to make his son a member of the fairly defined class, with suitable ideas inside but not unlimited range of tolerable variations on a basic theme." (Brogan, 1943:53) As a staunch supporter of bourgeois capitalism Hartley personifies a complacency with regard to class privilege and inherited wealth, a world in which being white and middle-class was the accepted norm.

Semiosis is also used in the school story to signify the fact that the fact that personal wealth was a basic necessity for a private or public school education. In Blyton's *Second Form at Malory Towers* (1948) the strain of attaining parity with the capitalist class is conveyed with the repetition of 'expense': "The uniform had been so expensive...Mother had bought her a new trunk and a new suitcase. More expense. Oh dear – was it really a good thing to win a scholarship to a school like Malory Towers if you had to count your pennies? Perhaps it wasn't." (p.103) An analysis of the quotation would point to the importance of ensuring that less wealthy parents could support their children and seek parity with those for whom a private education was sacrosanct. The desire for Ellen's mother to select a boarding school for her daughter's education and, in doing so, select which social type her daughter would associate with confirms the fact that lower working-class children were crucially disadvantaged. Blyton and other school story authors such as Chetham-Strode and Tring used semiosis as a linguistic device to convey the sense that giving the working-class child access to other styles of life and

modes of social relationships allowed for the transformation of their allegiances to both family and community.

As the school story texts are largely concerned with social structuring Blyton is representative of authors whose stories touch upon the relationship between semiosis and the social world. This is made known to the reader by various means including the portrayal of individual characters and their intentions by which semiosis is influenced by the character's habitus. The novels of Chatham-Strode and Tring, on the other hand, convey their interpretations of the truthfulness of social inequality by outlining a case in point, such as the negative attitude shown towards a working-class pupil in a public school setting. In this respect the discourse reflects the social reality of class conflict and semiosis reflects the dispositions that the characters acquire through social interaction with their habitat and through the social relations in their part of the social field.

The question of whether the social/educational inequality was inherent in the social order in Britain during the 1940s verges on the issue of exploitation, a relationship between the classes in which there exists an exploiting and an exploited class. In a Marxist analysis of social stratification there is the acknowledgement that one class exploits another if it appropriates labour from that class. In respect of the school story the reader is taken through a series of scenarios that illuminate the mobility chances of different groups within the population whereby the reader can assess whether any groups are more advantaged than others. The public school, for instance, played a crucial part in perpetuating the self-recruitment of the upper middle-class and making Britain less socially cohesive as a result. The portrayal of working-class children in Tring's novels gives substance to King's assertion that only the brightest middle-class boys gained places in more socially desirable schools post 1944. (King,1969:14) As a literary form the school story published in the 1940s is reproducing social reality in a fairly direct way in

which characters from a working-class background possess a class consciousness, a subjective awareness of one's social class position. The prospect of social mobility with the passing of the 1944 Education Act was one avenue that was opened to children from social backgrounds in which one would not expect to find much cultural capital.

Owing to the abolition of school fees and a resultant increase in the proportion of working-class boys being admitted to grammar schools to 54.4% during 1945-6 (King, 1969:13) the grammar school transmitted a culture that was derived mainly from the middle-class sectors of British society. The rivalry between the pupils of Bulling Grammar School and Bulling Modern School in Tring's *The Old Gang* (1947) depicts the differences in attitudes and allegiances between grammar school and secondary modern pupils in which the teenage sub-culture embraced both class and intelligence differences. It was through the reformed and expanded grammar schools, however, that the cultural gulf between the capitalist class and the aspiring middle-class came to be bridged. Whilst Tring's novels illuminated the Conservative Part's commitment under the 1944 Act to increase the equalization of opportunity it also laid bare the fact that there was little parity of esteem between the different types of state secondary school. The rise of the working-classes by the end of the 1940s was a result of social levelling-up rather than a levelling-down of the middle-classes, except for the really wealthy.

The next chapter will analyse a selection of school story texts published in the 1950s. They will be discussed in the light of educational and social changes of that decade which will contribute towards making a final assessment of the genre's contribution to its portrayal of social inequalities from 1940 to 1960.

Chapter 6

The depiction of social inequalities in British school stories of the 1950s

'The relations between literature and society can be seen to vary considerably in changing historical situations. As a society changes, its literature changes...for it is part of social growth and not simply its reflection.' (Williams, *The Long Revolution,* 1961: 243)

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse a selection of school stories which were published during the 1950s and examine how their contents portrayed the social inequalities of the nation during that decade. Although the analysis will be made using a similar approach to that of the previous chapter with regard to the educational and social developments I will also be elucidating the contrasts between the two decades by referring to authorial influences on the school story genre.

The process of critical discourse analysis will once again help to focus on the impact and function of the texts and how the various authors' works relate to the sociological and ideological context of the 1950s.

1.2 The 1950s – a changing British society

By the 1950s Britain was without an Empire and had become one of many competing industrial and modernised nations. Owing to the effects of the 1944 Act Britain had become a society in which education had noticeably extended and which offered increased opportunities for meritocratic social mobility. The newly acquired affluence had, in turn, created a consumer society which was symbolised by a profusion of cars, television and other

consumer goods. Bradbury argues that as Britain emerged from the post-war austerity there was a “steady process of cultural and social transformation and a shift from a class to a mass society.” (Bradbury,1971:27) For those parents who could afford to send their children to fee-paying schools the age-old concepts of privilege still prevailed.

Childs refers to this time in Britain’s social history as a ‘cultural revolution’, a period when issues such as class, gender roles and hegemony of middle-class culture were being challenged in the pursuit of equality. (Childs, 1995: 127) It was a perception that was in agreement with Gramsci’s vision of a working-class which, by necessity, had to become a potentially hegemonic class in order to resist “the pressures and limits of an existing and powerful hegemony.” (Williams, 1977:111) A major consequence of World War Two was that the working-class stratum of British society was motivated to become less tolerant of privilege and hierarchy, an attitude that was largely provoked by an increase in living standards due to a rise of industrial output at a rate of 3.7% per annum. (Cronin, 1984: 147) The prosperity for the young workers in the newer and more technically advanced industries may have inspired confidence in post-war Britain but those with more socialist ideals still wished for the fulfilment of their ultimate goal – the desire for equality. (Cronin, 1984: 174) Whilst it may have been somewhat premature for the working class to anticipate the dawn of a classless society in the wake of a Labour government there were indications of a shift in Britain’s class structure. The merging of the upper middle-class with the upper-class through marriage and the increased prosperity of the upper working-class still left enough room to separate the middle-class professional from the well-to-do working class. (Lewis & Maude, 1949: 24) The virtues that were embedded in the middle-class frame of mind continued to act as a buffer between them and the growing financial independence of the upper working-class. In this respect the effect of war was not the creation of a new social order but rather “a reformed type of capitalism” which left the existing social

order basically intact. (King & Raynor, 1981: 76) Although the staple values of duty, thrift and hard work were predominantly middle-class aspirations Marwick would argue that “the social facts of post-war Britain cannot be *explained* solely by reference to class, but they certainly cannot be fully *understood* without reference to class.” (Marwick, 2003: 26)

In my analysis of the school stories it will be seen that the ideologies of class are explicitly and implicitly encoded where the emphasis remains fixed on status and position. (McMillan, 2001: 29) The key value of ‘respectability’, however, was central to the notion of Englishness and which embodied moral authority. (Skeggs, 1997: 3) It is her later study of 2004 that informs my particular interest in class and the school story, especially as it [class] “encompasses interests, power and privilege.” (Skeggs, 2004: 45) An acknowledgement of the chasm that separated the working-class youth from the upper middle-class fraternity is reflected in the words of Frederick Willis whose book, *Peace and Dripping Toast* (1950), encapsulates the nature of the social division:

‘The normal boy of working-class parents, living in an atmosphere of realism in his home, had some sort of plan, founded on his own taste and the opinions of his parents, which he intended to carry out. They were not wildly fantastic plans such as bemuse the minds of many modern boys and girls, not plans founded on the pictures and the snobbishness of parents.’ (Willis, 1950: 53)

This is certainly an attitude of mind that is prevalent in E.W. Hildick’s school stories in which any bourgeois moral principles were anathema to *Jim Starling’s* home background. The effects of the changing political and cultural formations of the early Fifties will also be elicited in the school stories that were published during the decade. It would prove to be a decade when the

cultural assets of the working-class would be seen to be utilised to achieve material rewards.

1.3 Social Mobility in the 1950s

The rise of the middle class in the mid- twentieth century was attributed to several factors, the most significant being occupation and social aspirations. From an employment perspective the increase in scientific and technical professions combined with the rapid entry of women into minor middle-class occupations resulted in more money coming into middle class homes. The knock-on effect in the educational system, moreover, was that the middle class parent was more prepared to have their children educated by the state and take advantage of the grammar schools which were rapidly developing. In the new tripartite system that followed the 1944 Education Act a grammar school education was regarded as essential for admission to middle-class occupations in the same way that the junior technical schools gave a superior vocational education which was popular with working-class parents.

The emergence of the 'affluent society' in the 1950s raised questions about whether it would bring to an end the old class society. (Childs, 1995: 125) The changing structure of the national economy had the effect of facilitating social mobility which would effectively weaken the class barriers. On the strength of the working-classes achieving the levels of consumption previously regarded as attainable only by the middle-class, the Prime Minister in July, 1957, Harold Macmillan, was moved to declare to the nation that they 'had never had it so good'. (Ryder & Silver,1970: 224) The consumer revival led to a merging of the classes through the progressive 'embourgeoisement' of the workers. (Royle, 1987: 151) Politically, both the Labour and Conservative parties were adopting similar moderate policies thereby removing clear dividing lines between two ideologies.

1.4 Educational Mobility in the 1950s

The changing picture of education in Britain accompanied the social changes. Whilst it is not possible to measure accurately the number and proportion of pupils who were at private and public schools the estimates since 1921 were that approximately 90% of the population aged between 5 and 14 attended maintained elementary and secondary schools leaving the majority of the remaining 10% receiving their education at private or public schools or being home taught. (Marsh, 1965: 208) The continued existence of public and private schools perpetuated the inequalities of educational mobility, a fact that was rooted in social class differences.

The kinds of values and attitudes that the child comes to hold is often garnered from a variety of sources which include her family and “the response of the family to the shared experience of television, radio, films, magazines and newspapers.” (Ryder & Silver, 1970: 218) In most middle-class families the values of the school were often reinforced by those of the home whereas children of working-class families often learned at school the same values that the middle-class child experienced on a day-to-day basis at home.

Under the tripartite system that was introduced by the 1944 Education Act the provision of equal opportunities for children for all social backgrounds, irrespective of their abilities, was a guiding principle that was compromised by the fact that the different kinds of schools were, in the main, differently valued in British society. This was due to various factors which took into consideration locality and the physical condition of the buildings in addition to the fact that the qualifications of the staff teaching in the secondary modern schools were often inferior to those teaching in the grammar and public schools only one-fifth being graduates. (Kynaston, 2015: 219)

The picture of secondary education in 1955 can be summed up in the following statistics. Out of a population of 2 million students, 500,000 were in secondary grammar schools, 1.25 million were in secondary modern schools and 250,000 were in public and fee-paying schools. It was still a situation in which the public schools were at the centre of an elite education, enjoying enormous popularity and reputation whilst the masses were open to a rudimentary education with the majority achieving a modest level of educational achievement. The value of a grammar school education was such that throughout the 1950s Labour leaders continued to defend the retention of the grammar school. The parents realised the social and intellectual prestige that the schools carried and the opportunities they offered. The perception that failure in the 11+ meant an end to all hopes of professional careers was a very real one.

In contrast to the ethos of the grammar schools during the 1950s the secondary modern schools worked on a model which was based on activity as opposed to academic study. The work was to be largely unspecialised in its outlook and be ‘unsystematic’ (Dent, 1954: 90) in that the nature of the curriculum was not based on the traditional subjects. As the work was less academically demanding than in the grammar schools the secondary modern curriculum had a knowledge and skills base that was learned largely through practical application.

The educational hierarchy that followed on into the 1950s was based on four educational communities: the public school, the grammar school, the technical high school and the secondary modern school. Each of the schools prepared their pupils for their envisaged roles in the workplace although it remained a system that did very little to promote mobility and selection established a hierarchy of schools with the major boarding schools at the top and the secondary modern school at the bottom.

Despite the extension of equality of opportunity there was no fundamental change in the structure of social class relations. To this extent one's family background and social class remained "the most important determinants of 'educability' and educational 'achievement'. (Ryder & Silver, 1970: 241) The disillusionment surrounding the criticism of the 11+ examination which determined which pupils were eligible for a grammar school education was based on the accusation that the tests were arbitrary and unreliable.

Norman Fisher, Manchester's Chief Education Officer in 1957, questioned the attraction of the secondary modern school as an alternative to the grammar school as he conceded that "even where there are secondary modern schools in first-rate buildings, it has seldom been possible to persuade parents or children that they offer a reasonable alternative to the grammar school." (Kynaston, 2015: 230)

The shortcoming of the tripartite system and the nation's class system could also be appreciated by a visiting professor of genetics in Oxford in 1958. As a result of her visits to a selection of comprehensive and grammar schools her sobering indictment of educational segregation in Britain was that it was "a pity it [secondary education] had to get mixed up with social class, and the business of having a proper accent. That hopeful phrase, 'purity of esteem', is as hollow as our 'separate but equal.' The main difference is that we discriminate against a minority and the English against a majority." (Kynaston, 2015: 241) It was disparity that was brought to the for in the Crowther Report in 1959 which found that the children of non-manual workers were greatly outnumbered by those whose fathers were semi-skilled workers. (Maclure, 1986: 248)

The undeniable fact was that one's secondary education, combined with one's social background, would have a far-reaching effect on one's educational mobility. The child from a middle-class home with a grammar

school education would be five more times likely to go on to a university education than a child whose father was an unskilled worker but had also attended a grammar school. (Kynaston, 2015: 219)

The social and educational picture of 1950s Britain provided a rich source for the school story authors to include a selection of vignettes into their storylines which, either discreetly or indiscreetly, represented a socially divided nation.

1.5 The School Story in the 1950s

The Second World War had the effect of reviving the spirit of patriotism in the same way that the First World War had stirred the nation's youth into fighting for its country 25 years earlier. The public school ideal of instilling the virtues of patriotism, duty and service were inherent in those school stories that the novels of Frank Richards continued to write after the demise of *The Gem* and *The Magnet*. Popular school stories were still being published in magazines such as *The Captain* and *The Public School Magazine* that were aimed specifically at a public school readership. At the other end of the social scale the schooling of the working class was geared to the promotion of the middle-class values of discipline, thrift and hard work which ultimately gave an avenue of escape for the brightest youngsters. The school story provided an outlet for the working class schoolboy who had an aspiration to higher things but, at the same time, accepted the status quo. At the outbreak of the Second World War the Victorian social model which dictated the hierarchy and class system with everyone in his place had been preserved for at least a century. The school story had helped in its way to allow the absorption of a set of elite role models and values which between them ensured social cohesion and relative stability.

The school stories produced by Geoffrey Trease were a true reflection of the social class system which was powerfully reinforced by the educational system during the first half of the twentieth century. This would be continued into the next decade when the distinctions between the secondary schools provided three separate niches for the pupils: the public schools catering for the upper and middle classes, the grammar for the lower middle and upper working class and the secondary modern for the bulk of the working class.

As Trease wrote thirty years earlier than Redmond's first published *Grange Hill* novel:

"The school story is a legitimate and desirable form...But if the literary form is to develop it must begin to reflect the new conditions. Someone will tell us at once that the child does not want stories laid in the new Secondary Modern or the Technical School. It must be the aged elms and the velvet turf, the mortar-board and the masked intruder, or nothing...But it is not the author's job to wait for a lead. He should be giving it. The creation of a new secondary school has just the same dramatic possibilities as the creation of a new house, or the revival of a moribund boarding-school, both popular themes in the old tradition. There is just as much potential drama, and infinitely more scope for originality, in depicting the life of any day-school." (Trease, 1964: 121)

Before entering into a more detailed critical discourse analysis it would be pertinent to restate my preferred method of analysing the school story texts which is to consider how each text contributes to the social and cultural setting in which it occurs. My intention is to show that through the use of spoken and written discourse particular social and gendered identities are created, thereby giving the reader an indication of how the author's use of

language is influenced by the relationship between the characters as well as the effect of language upon social identities. The concept of social identity is central to my analysis as it informs the reader of the values and attitudes that the characters display. The culture-specific ways of recognising identities is fundamental to the manner in which social inequalities have been depicted in the school story genre. (Paltridge, 2006:11)

The structure at this stage of the critical discourse analysis will be based on two interlinking areas: language and social class. Where it is relevant the backgrounds of the authors will also be considered in relation to the social issues and concerns that are raised in their respective novels.

I will also be considering the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. As the novels span most of Britain's educational system with the exception of the state primary school it will be possible to discern different views of Britain's society by the language used. In this respect the reader will see "how discourse is shaped by relationships between participants and the effects discourse has upon social identities and relations." (Paltridge,2006:20)

In my analysis of the novels the school stories that are set in the private sector will be juxtaposed with those in the maintained sector in order that the comparisons can be fully appreciated.

1.6.1 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage One

It would be salutary at this point to reinforce the fact that critical discourse analysis is geared to a better understanding of the nature and sources of social wrongs, the impediments to addressing them and the possible ways of overcoming the obstacles, whether it be by political intervention or otherwise.

This section will again focus on the social demarcations that were inherent in the British class system but from the perspective of the school stories published in the 1950s. As the reforms which were implemented by the Labour Party following World War Two were limited in their scope the nation's class system remained virtually intact. Havinghurst's general analysis of the nation's social stratification in the 1950s provides a framework in which the school stories can be placed. Besides highlighting the disparity between the social classes the table also helps to illustrate the boundaries that had to be crossed by working-class pupils in order to achieve mobility and a resulting social change.

Approximate Percentages of the population in the Various Social Classes
Upper 3%
Upper Middle 7%
Lower Middle 20%
Upper Lower 50%
Lower Lower 20%

(Source: Havinghurst, 1958: 174)

A more detailed analysis of Britain's class structure based on the 1951 Census is presented here in comparison with Havinghurst's more general representation.

Class 1 (directors of business enterprise, managers, officers in armed forces, lawyers, professional scientists, authors, higher civil servants)
567,800 - 3.3%

Class 2 (shopkeepers, farmers, teaching, nursing managers)
2,542,000 - 14.8%

Class 3 (foremen & supervisors, clerks, shop assistants, typists, skilled manual workers)
9,035,200 - 52.5%

Class 4 (semi-skilled workers)
2,826,000 - 16.4%

Class 5 (unskilled workers)
2,234,300 - 13% (Source: Cole, 1955:45 & 150)

Although the classification by occupational groups should not be regarded as an attempt to classify each individual it does allow the reader to appreciate the types of occupation allotted to each 'social class' on the undertaking that Britain's entire occupied population could be reasonably classified in a definite order of preference.

The classification bore the hallmarks of a capitalist society in which the bourgeois ideology of autonomy and self-sufficiency served the interest of the ruling class and in which the occupations were based on notions of status as well as income.

The stratification was a rigid form of social ranking which was reflected in the school stories whereby relationships within the school and the community were governed by parental social status besides the children's own perceptions of status within the school's social hierarchy. Despite real improvements in the standard of living there still remained the distinctions between the various social strata and an acute awareness of class consciousness. The organisation of the tripartite school system continued from the late Forties into the early Fifties to encourage the growth of informal social relationships along social class lines resulting in the perpetuation of "the social cleavages of class society." (Ford, 1969:109) By 1958 the

tripartite system was in reality between the public, grammar and secondary modern schools as the secondary technical schools only contained 4 per cent of the secondary school population and did not exist in more than 40 per cent of local education authorities. (Ainley,1993:30) The lack of such schools was a fundamental reason why no school story was ever written with a technical school being used as a backdrop for school fiction.

In keeping with a noticeable shift from stories that were based entirely on expensive and exclusive boarding schools Wallace Hildick's stories about 'Jim Starling' represents a praiseworthy attempt to deal honestly and realistically with a working-class school from a boy's point of view. The criteria for success for the traditional boys' school stories hinge on several factors. As illustrated by the books of Frank Richards and Anthony Buckeridge the reader appreciates the degree of authenticity where the seemingly realistic portraits of school life reflect the actual world of school rather than an idealised fantasy. If children's fiction is regarded essentially as an escape route from reality it will conflict with the assumption that readers identify with the protagonists and thus take on their particular value positions. With regards to this issue Leeson plays the Devil's advocate in that "although he [Leeson] feels the need to recognise himself or herself...it is [also] argued that the working-class child does not want 'only to read about itself' and likes to escape into a different world in its reading...to escape and have vicarious pleasure and thrill." (Hunt, 1999: 26)

Adhering to the more modern trend of state school settings E.W. Hildick began his writing career whilst teaching in a Dewsbury secondary modern school where he was inspired to write a novel where his intended audience would comprise "tough, modern kids similar to the ones I teach." (Sleeve notes from *Jim Starling and the Colonel,* 1960) Before writing his first Jim Starling novel that was published in 1957 entitled simply *Jim Starling,* Hildick realised that there was a need in post-war Britain for books written for, and

about, working-class children. Set in Cement Street Secondary Modern School for Boys in Smogbury proved a pleasant change from the usual straw-hatted hero and the ancient walls of Greyfriars. Hildick wanted to present a world which meant something to the ordinary child who went to a council school.

The novelty value of Hildick's setting and working-class characters, however, did not escape the attention of his critics. The fundamental shift towards school stories centred round a working-class secondary modern school met with stiff opposition from those who were loyal to the traditional formula. Believing that pupils that he knew wanted occasionally to read about their own kind he was informed that "working-class kids disliked reading about such circumstances and craved nothing less than total escape." (Rowe Townsend, 1965: 123) Following on from writers such as Frank Richards the literary class struggle seemed important at the time although some critics believed that the boys who appeared in the Starling books are stereotyped characters.

E.W. Hildick is often attributed as being one of the earliest children's author to set school stories in the state sector. (Kirkpatrick,2000:172) In his novel *Jim Starling* the reader is introduced to Jim Starling's school, Cement Street Secondary Modern School, situated in the town of Smogbury with the opening image:

'The playground of the Cement Street Secondary Modern School looks very grey and bare at eight o'clock in the morning, even in May." (p.7)

Hildick's bleak portrayal of a post-war secondary school's immediate environment is stark. The union of negative images conjured up by 'grey and bare' and 'Cement Street' creates a world that is far removed from Mayne's ivy-covered chorister school or Richards' Greyfriars. The novel was ground-

breaking in that it gave a “voice to ordinary boys at ordinary schools.” (Kirkpatrick,2000:172) Big Smig, Jim Starling’s arch-rival, typifies the attitude of those pupils who were disenchanted with life in general, managing to survive secondary education until they were fifteen years of age was enough of a challenge for many. Cement Street Secondary Modern School consisted of pupils who took one day at a time with no clear vision of what the future may hold for them. In Jim’s case to gain a place in the school’s First Eleven cricket team and perhaps represent his county in future years was ambition enough. Hildick knew from his own experience as a teacher in a secondary modern school in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, (Kirkpatrick,2000:172) that the lack of academic qualifications would severely limit the prospects of securing well-paid employment and many school leavers would either find low-paid jobs or rely upon social benefits. The grim reality of an education which helped to promote manual skills for the manufacturing industries is effectively suggested as Big Smig contemplates earning £10 a week sorting scrap metal and “considered every day he spent there [school] was a waste of time and money.” (p.10) He would not be alone in his wish to leave school at the earliest opportunity. Instead of the masters with mortar boards and gentle dispositions the reader is presented with a school that comprises pugilistic teachers whose threatening language presents quite a contrasting image to other school stories as Mr. Pickwith (‘Picky’) addresses a pupil:

“What *is* your excuse?...*Why*? I want to know, before I tear you into five thousand bits of boy.” (p. 18)

To a hardened pupil who may have experienced similar threats at home or school this outburst would have passed by without a second thought. Hildick’s creation of a portentous situation through the use of the hyperbolic phrase “tear you into a thousand bits” reveals a tacit appreciation of the language that could well have been used in a secondary modern school, expressions with which Hildick himself would have been familiar as a former

teacher in such schools. The hackneyed repetition of similar threats would, in time, be less intimidating although it reflected the adversative relationship between teacher and pupil. For a reader who had the advantage of a caring home background and a supportive school such a scenario would have been beyond one's experience. In this case Hildick would have succeeded in allowing his fictional characters to convincingly portray a world that was real and whose culture shared none of the privileges associated with the upper middle-class and a public school education.

In the same way that Hildick was writing for the child who went to a state secondary modern school Trease's school stories based on the *Bannermere* series of novels explored the world of the grammar school. Compared to the pupils of Cement Street Secondary Modern School the pupils of Winthwaite Grammar School enjoyed more agreeable surroundings set among the uplifting Cumberland countryside. In contrast to Big Smig and Jim Starling the ambition of the narrator of Trease's *Black Banner Players* (1952), Bill Melbury, has more academic aspirations:

"I want to get a scholarship and go to university, if I can -." (p.57)

This would not generally have been the exception to the rule for a grammar school pupil and is a clear indication of how the grammar school provided a foothold for potential educational and social mobility.

Winthwaite Grammar School could, in essence, be mistaken for a public school as Bill admits that his mother's view of a grammar school education was thorough:

"Mum was right. Life *was* full, that Certificate year. Masses of prep. Games. Parades. The week was one mad rush, and Saturday brought us no relief. Usually there was a match in the afternoon..." (p.135)

The combination of a longer school life and the prospect of greater examination success elevated the prospect of a combination of better employment with higher wages. The difference between an education at this school compared to that at Cement Street Secondary Modern could not be any starker. The sense of fulfilment that must have been shared by Bill and his peers is quite palpable. The headmaster was suitably supportive of his school as he believed that:

"A boy has enough to occupy his time, what with examinations and games and sensible boyish hobbies and pursuits..." (p.81)

Stephen Tring's novel, *Barry's Exciting Year* (1951), also reinforces the aspirations that were generated by a grammar school education. Tring's narrative reflects the ambitions that were universally shared by parents who never had the opportunity of such an education:

'He [Mr. Briggs] dreamed of sending Barry to the Stillminster Grammar School (which was very old and very good); and from the Grammar School he had visions of the boy going on to a University. And in his wilder moments (but he never told this bit to anybody, not even to Mum) he indulged in daydreams about degrees and titles and wonderful high-sounding and highly paid posts." (p.31)

The assumptions made by Mr Briggs in his personal acclamation of the merits of the grammar school is very consistent with the general understanding that a grammar school education had the potential of raising the aspirations of working-class children. The allusion to "degrees and other titles" encapsulates a parent's desire for his child to attain sufficient educational qualifications to gain employment which had hitherto been accessible only to the middle-class.

Such patriarchal pride is reinforced in Tring's later novel, *Barry's Great Day* (1954) in which Mr Briggs "was never able to disguise the pride he felt in Barry's achievement at having won a scholarship to 'the Grammar'; and one of his three favourite daydreams was imagining his son's triumphant progress on to a University, and academic honours of the highest and most impossible sort." (p. 17)

Tring's realistic description of a father's ambitions for his son using convincing dialogue reinforces the feeling that ambition is a positive driving force. Living on a council estate was not perceived by the author as a dead-end for aspirations but rather as a springboard for social advancement. Hard work and diligence were the required values that Barry employed to pass the entrance exam and the words of his future headmaster instilled in Barry a sense of purpose and achievement:

"As from the beginning of next term you will be a Grammar School boy," Mr. Hinde told him, "and I shall expect you to behave like one and to be a credit to the place." (p.17)

The foregrounding in Trease's and Tring's novels underpin the values of making the most of one's talents and persevering to achieve set grades. Whilst the 11+ examination provided the working-class child with an achievable goal it is Hildick who presents the reader with the rather more daunting prospects of the majority who failed the examination.

A grammar school pupil reading *Black Banner Players, Barry's Exciting Year* and *Barry's Great Day* in the 1950s would have quite readily identified with the novels' portrayal of school life and the prospects that a grammar school education could engender. The difference in social behaviour between the pupils of cement Street Secondary Modern School and Winthwaite Grammar School is quite apparent as shown by the tone of language and the variance in the characters' expectations of life.

In spite of signs of adaptation to the changing times the boys' school story lacked the momentum that it had gathered before World War Two and it was the turn of the girls' school story to steal more of the genre's limelight.

Of all the established writers of girls' school stories by the 1950s the most popular authors were Elinor Brent-Dyer, Dorita Fairlie Bruce and Antonia Forest. Writing to entertain rather than focus on moral instruction Brazil was different from her other contemporaries in that she did not set her series of books in a particular school preferring to write novels that presented new characters, a new school and a new scenario. The popularity of boarding schools for girls had gained respectability among middle-class parents during the first half of the century and, together with changes in the wider social context, which gave more educational and professional openings for girls, the girls' school stories reflected a wider enjoyment of life. Similar to the boys' stories there was not a strong demand for moral didacticism of the old type whilst the changes in the educational and social attitudes offered further scope for the writers.

In parallel with the style of the early boys' school stories the girls' stories began with an emphasis on moral virtues and the promotion of self-sacrifice. The commonality with the boys' stories extended to include aspects of school life such as friendship, sports and honour. In contrast to the boys' stories that converged on tough masculinity, the girls' stories reflected a culture which was more focused on personal relations that encouraged friendship and security. Although school stories made a particular contribution to the emotional development of the school child Jenkinson explains the difference in the fundamental fashion between the boys' and girls' stories as being "due to the inherent sexual differences and to the social pressures set up by different economic and social functions of men and women." (Jenkinson, 1940: 176) As a result of the difference in tone and presentation of the storyline the girls would give much more attention to school stories than boys.

We are informed in *Susan in the Sixth* (1955) that the school, which combined the best of boarding- and day-school, "was exclusive and

expensive, and had no rivals. The only one in the district was Charnley, an infinitely inferior day school (in Melling eyes).” (p.27) The disparaging remark targeted against a rival school as being ‘infinitely inferior’ gives further evidence of the snobbery which was founded upon personal wealth and social aspirations.

Whilst the image of Melling was not untypical of the private schools portrayed in other school stories of the time it is the image of two individuals that is revealing:

“She [Miss Scott] was a humorous person, who took languages, and ran the school library with the efficient help of Roddy Blake. Roddy and Miss Scott were allies, united in detesting unintelligent people, and their love for the English language.” (p.27)

The use of the phrase ‘detesting unintelligent people’ immediately presents a value judgment that was indicative of intellectual snobbery as much as class snobbery. It is perhaps a trait with which some readers could identify but Biggs is careful to moderate such an extreme impression by presenting Roddy’s parents in a much more positive light. Both her parents are writers whose income and lifestyle have allowed their three daughters to enjoy being educated at Melling School. The issue of social snobbery arises when a parent of one of Roddy’s school friends “began to feel that the Blakes were indeed worth cultivating.” Furthermore she “was rather a snob where famous people were concerned.” (p.166)

Social identity is central to Biggs’ novels and this is apparent in *Susan in the Sixth* (1955) when Laura Lacey is unexpectedly made Head Girl, thus causing Susan Blake’s initial jealousy. It is pertinent to note that the characters’ home backgrounds were just as important to the author as the events that occurred in school. For example, we are given two contrasting images of family homes of two girls whose fortunes at school rely solely on

individual talents. Susan Blake's home, Bramberley House, "was a beautiful old house, and the grounds were equally beautiful and well-cared for." (p.22) Laura's family, on the other hand, had been less fortunate with regard to material wealth but this was not a drawback for her personality and potential to transcend such misfortunes:

"The Laceys were well-known in that part of Cambridgeshire. Years before they had been wealthy and owned a good deal of property. Now they were poor, and lived in a small house in Bramberley Village, but they were always treated with respect and admiration. They were forceful people, quick-tempered and inclined to arrogance, with plenty of courage and determination. Laura was a Lacey, and so, everybody thought, was to be respected." (p.42)

The listing of the family's personality traits, 'forceful', 'courage' and 'determination' are ones that would extract most families from desperate situations and, indeed, would not be out of place with the values of working-class families who were intent on achieving their goals in life. The author's intention in broadening the narrative to illustrate the link between home and school to complement each other is expressed in her own words in the Preface to a later edition of *Susan in the Sixth* (1955); written in 2007:

"I always prefer to keep the story moving out of school hours, to keep the wider picture of family life in general. School on its own can be burdensome and claustrophobic, as I well recall." (p.10)

Not only is it an authorial decision which helped to give a more rounded view of the characters but it also presented a more complete picture of family circumstances on which the reader's judgment of social identity could be based.

Like her contemporaries Mabel Allan often used the school story genre but, unlike the majority of her fellow authors, Allan was sympathetic to the educational philosophy of A.S. Neill, a proponent of freedom and self-discipline in childhood.

Mabel Allan's novel, *The School on North Barrule* (1952), is an interesting choice as it bridges the private and state sectors of education and offers an insight into the variety of social backgrounds of the North Barrule School pupils.

Voirrey and Andreas Quilliam's father has died and although both children had were pupils at the High school and Grammar school their Aunt Beth had offered to pay for them to receive a private education. The ensuing discussions revolved around their mother placating her children's anxieties and the reader is presented with Allan's view of educational choices based on a rationale rather than choosing a private education simply because it is an affordable option.

Allan herself was the recipient of a private education and later taught in a preparatory school. Her ideas concerning 'progressive' education were heavily influenced by the ideals implemented by A.S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill School: "all ages would mix equally, the school would be co-educational, the pupils were encouraged to organise their own work and concentrate on subjects that would interest them." (Sims & Clare,2000:44)

An indirect reference to Neill's ideology appears in Allan's novel when Voirrey is recounting her mother's assessment of Barrule House:

"Mother was saying yesterday that it's a modern sort of school, though not really progressive. In really progressive schools the boys and girls make the rules and do just what they like, and don't even work if they don't want to. Barrule House isn't like that..." (p.16)

The fact that the Quilliam children were leaving state schools for one of Allan's more 'progressive' establishments makes the novel all the more appealing as it offered an alternative setting for its middle-class readers.

Not surprisingly both Voirrey and Andreas initially find it difficult to adjust to their new life on the Isle of Man. Allan presents a situation whereby acceptance into the new community is dependent upon the children's ability and willingness to cast aside any prejudices or misgivings concerning private education.

From Voirrey's perspective:

"Almost certainly everything at Barrule House was going to be very different indeed from the High School; already she had realised that the girls were different, more confident and assured." (p.27)

The final clause encapsulates the impression that many parents would have agreed with in the 1950s, that the majority of children who pass through the private sector attain an air of confidence and assurance which those in the state system did not always possess.

Andreas notes too that "Even the boys were unlike his friends at the Grammar School, for they seemed to talk about things that were outside his ken – river and sea-fishing, sailing and even archaeology." (pp.45-6)

Allan's belief in the importance of self-expression is central to her protagonists' adjustment to their new environment. Acceptance by the other pupils is indeed a key element of the novel, the need to bridge the gap between their old and new way of life.

It is a school and community that both children adapt to and to which they become strongly attached. The depth of feeling is reflected in Voirrey's reassuring statement that "To think at the beginning of April I had never even heard of Barrule House, and now I feel as though I really belong. I didn't know I could be so happy." (p.196)

Although the social barriers that initially existed between the Quilliam children and the Barrule House pupils proved to be a surmountable challenge it should be remembered that the opportunity was dependent upon the financial generosity of the children's Aunt Beth. For the middle-class reader of the novel Allan has presented an image of possible alternatives to the High schools and Grammar schools which could perhaps offer a more enlightened education but one which was more dependent on a family's wealth rather than scholastic ability.

Wallace's novel *Sons of Gentlemen* (1953) reveals the abuses of the 1944 Education Act whereby anyone could claim to run a boarding school and attract lower middle-class boys who had failed the 11+ examination but whose parents did not wish their sons to attend a secondary modern school. This was the *raison d'etre* for Hereward Stringer, Oxford MA, to establish Baconsthorpe School and who would "do the real teaching, if we happen to get any boys worth teaching, which I rather doubt, seeing that any child with the ghost of a brain will be drafted to Grammar School." (*Sons of Gentlemen,* 1953 p.11) This is reinforced by a patronising indictment of the pupils' lack of academic ability as Stringer addresses his teaching staff:
"Remember, they are the no-goods who can't get to Grammar School." (p. 12)

Although the Headmaster's aim was to capitalise on the boys' parental preferences he is fortunate to have an ally in James Felton, a member of staff who agrees that "something ought to be done for boys...whose parents were reluctant to see them mingling with the throw-outs at the Secondary Moderns: and for those boys of decent middle-class parentage...debarred by taxation from the so-called public school (now only public to the rich) which had formerly been regarded as their right." (p.19) Wallace emphasises the social disparity with her use of value judgments such as "throw-outs" and "decent middle-class parentage" which clearly depicts the unchanging

divisiveness of the class system of the 1950s. The allusion to the “right” of the upper- and middle-class to a public school education is an additional factor which reinforces the parents’ perception of a school’s social status regardless of its selection process is wholly based on snobbery and a belief that the social value of the culture transmitted by the private school system would have a high middle-class loading. The type of boy who attended Baconsthorpe School in Wallace’s novel weren’t “clever enough to gain entry to Grammar Schools; not rich enough to pay the fees of Public Schools, there is nothing for them but the ignominy and the very mixed company of a ‘Secondary Modern’, unless people of vision...will provide something in the nature of a lesser public school, at fees which the parents can pay.” (p.19)

By way of castigating the secondary modern pupils for their “ignominy and...very mixed company” Wallace proposes an alternative tier of secondary education, that of a “lesser public school.” It is a suggestion which may have received considerable support from the cross-section of parents who wished their children to follow an educational path that was distinct from that offered by the State but was largely affordable by normal public school standards. However, it is a course of action that is admonished by Sara, a secondary modern school teacher in the north of England:

“If these parents of moderate means are too snobby to take advantage of State education, for which, mark you, they have paid in rates and taxes, they deserve what they get, I dare say. The damnable thing is that it’s the children, not the parents, who suffer.” (pp. 28-29)

As an answer to the middle-class mother’s prayers Baconsthorpe School symbolises an educational repository for children of aspirational parents who represented a new under-privileged class, the victims of a proletarianisation of the middle class. It is a situation that resonates with Cooper’s portrayal of the grammar school in his first novel *Scenes From Provincial Life* (1950) in

which “the school did not have number one social standing in the town, and the pupils all came from the lower middle-class and upper proletariat.” (p.35) To endorse the argument that social stratification was too confining and should not be used to classify each individual Felton agrees that “it was the fault of the times, this classifying of people by their incomes and their brains and what-have-you, while in reality every person is in a class by himself.” (p.203) It is an observation that receives an endorsement from Willingham, the local vicar, who replies that “it’s not a fault of our times only...though now perhaps we classify more sensibly than in the days of Working Class versus The Rest...” (p.203)

Doreen Wallace had first-hand experience of a privileged education which began in Malvern and concluded with her graduation from Somerville College, Oxford. In her capacity as a former grammar school teacher she was in a position to use her working knowledge of the tripartite system to make a value judgment on the social ethnicity of Baconsthorpe School. It is a novel which highlighted the shameful practice of cheap boarding schools taking advantage of the gullibility of middle-class snobbery.

The setting of a secondary modern school provided a contrasting backdrop to the public school and grammar school story. As the tripartite system was more established in the 1950s it is unsurprising that some authors chose the secondary modern school as a comparison that accentuated the social class divisions and provided an accompanying picture of educational inequality.

The combination of poverty and low expectations of financial security curtailed the options for social change for the vast majority of working-class families. Giroux’s perception of schools as being more than “merely ideological reflections of the wider society” (Giroux, 1981:15) is encapsulated in Blishen’s novel *Roaring Boys – A Schoolmaster’s Agony* (1955) in which Stonehill Street Secondary Modern School is portrayed as an institution

which is characterized by an ongoing struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. The week's trip to Paris exemplifies the fact that the school cannot be removed from the socio-economic institutions in which it is situated:

"But for Stonehill Street this surely was a step forward, a step out of the slumminess of these lives, out of the world of second-hand shops and shabby cinemas...

There must be more expeditions of this kind...a token of the enlargement of the boys' world that might come – that ought to come – out of the new order in English education." (pp.162-163)

The schoolmaster's conjecture of social inequality in that "the comedy [of Stonehill Street] sprouted from a compost of social tragedy" (p.227) is compounded by the recollection of a conversation with an ex-grammar school colleague:

"You've said yourself again and again that you have reasons for feeling inferior to people who have a decent home and who've been decently educated." (p.209)

The reader is thus presented with a representation of a working-class environment in which social inequality has been transmitted from generation to generation, based upon an imposing system of domination which is in parallel with Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. The reproduction of socio-economic arrangements that existed in Britain in the mid-1950s provided little support for the families that would feed into Stonehill Street Secondary Modern School.

The following extract represents Blishen's comment upon a situation that was redolent of Britain's working-class in which children from moneyless homes were placed at a distinct disadvantage with regard to achieving a positive self-esteem:

"Yet the sobbing boy on the stairs seemed to represent all our truants, all our misfits. He was the legacy of a long period of social neglect...
What they were missing: decent homes. And the decent homes their fathers and grandfathers hadn't had." (p.254)

The allusion to "truants" and "misfits" is aligned with the term "social neglect" which emphasises the corollary between an unsupported social background and impoverished life chances. As the product of a divided society the "sobbing boy" characterises the negative attitude of a cross-section of pupils from working-class backgrounds who were exempt from competing on a footing of absolute equality with his middle-class counterparts. It is a situation which reflects the wealth distribution in the late 1950s whereby the richest 5 per cent owned 75 per cent of the total wealth which was exacerbated by the fact that "the share of incomes...enjoyed by different occupational strata was not fundamentally different from what it had been shortly before World War One." (Kynaston, 2015:217)

A similar picture of prevailing working-class attitudes in defiance of social mobility is presented in Croft's novel *Spare The Rod* (1954) in which Angell, a secondary modern school pupil, informs his teacher that he didn't "want any of them fancy jobs, sir. My dad's been at the motor works all his life, and 'e says what's good for 'im is good enough for me." (p.66) Croft provides a candid portrayal of Bourdieu's social reproduction whereby Angell epitomises the acceptance of class identity in which "the most socially significant and meaningful social class stratification is a simple manual/non-manual division". (Ford, 1969:35)

In effect Angell is enunciating a situation that Blishen had witnessed as a teacher in a secondary modern school whereby "most of the boys knew that the system didn't really care about them and wasn't really bothered if they did badly." (Kynaston, 2007:572) It is an attitude of mind that is seemingly confirmed by the attitude of his headmaster who confides that "Your

grammar schools and your technical schools and your progressive schools – they're all very well. But in this kind of school – we don't deal with minds. We deal with instincts – bad ones, mostly, animal in some cases." (p.151) The despondency of his remarks is supplemented later in the novel as he rails against the consequences of the tripartite system and concedes that his school was unable to provide an education that compared with that of the grammar school:

"You know that education – what we understand by education – doesn't even get a chance." (pp.248 -249)

It is an admission that summarises the despair of the educational inequality which became a hallmark of the nation's educational system.

Croft was well qualified to be able to compare the grammar school values with those of the secondary modern. A former pupil of Burnage Grammar School and graduate of Keble College, Oxford, he worked mainly as a private tutor and supply teacher in challenging secondary modern schools. His experiences in these schools would later inform his largely autobiographical novel *Spare The Rod.* One of the consequences of the 1944 Education Act was enunciated by Angell in that his limited occupational horizons following a secondary modern education defined him as society in the 1950s defined him. In the case of a grammar school who was largely optimistic about his chances of occupational success the tripartite system engendered a relative social segregation of the potential occupational 'successes' from the 'failures', thus reinforcing the social stratification in the wider society.

1.6.2 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage Two

With regard to the linguistic/semiotic analysis of the school stories published in the 1950s the signification exhibited by the characters presents a range of

interpretations relating to social and educational inequality. The signifiers are predominantly put forward by teachers and pupils although some are shown by parents who are representative of the various social classes.

Images of affluence that are embedded in the stories relating to the private sector are plentiful but it is the characters who are the most important factors when portraying social class. Spolton acknowledges the fact that “Fiction must tell us not only about the way people live and work but also what they are like. It is the drawing of character in action, and from it we should learn something through our thoughts, feelings and imagination.” (Spolton,1963:126) Those characters who feel that status and class background are sufficient grounds for displaying arrogance towards others is represented in the description of Eastminster School’s headmaster in Cleaver’s novel *The Captain of Two Schools* (1950) who possessed ‘a dry sardonic sense of humour almost like that of Bernard Shaw, and that he lived his life on a plane from which he could look down disdainfully on less remarkable people than himself.’ (p.109) The fine line that separates fact and fiction is exemplified in this instance by a headmaster who is driven by a desire to make his school the best at whatever cost, even if it entails deceit and subterfuge.

The powerful combination of word and gesture can be appreciated in Blishen’s *Roaring Boys – A Schoolmaster’s Agony* (1955) as the teacher in the secondary modern school is in conversation with Gibson, an erstwhile colleague at Mount Preparatory School. When asked where he was now teaching:

“I told him and his face puckered. It was if I’d thrust a slice of lemon into his mouth.”

“Stonehill Street Secondary Modern School,” he murmured. “That sounds rather...”

And he didn't need a word to finish his sentence, for his face was supplying it, growing more and more puckered with elegant wryness." (p.181)

Such an exchange of words and accompanying facial expressions, interrupted by a strategically placed ellipsis, communicates a tacit condemnation of a state education as opposed to a private education. The depiction of utter disbelief shown by Gibson's "puckered" face convincingly conveys a personal point of view that conflicts with his former colleague. The focus of contrasting ideologies between the two teachers who are caught up in a system which is class-based and class-divisive can also be compared with Hartley's disapproval of admitting working-class pupils to public schools in Chetham-Strode's *The Guinea Pig* published nine years earlier:

"He comes from a slum and he's got a mind like a slum..." (p.44)

Gibson, too, signifies his view of maintaining a clear stratification in schools when he justifies the continuation of an elitist hierarchy:

"I mean – this Education Act!...Rather like these big classical concerts in sports arenas, don't you think? Trying to fetch along the wrong people." (*Roaring Boys* – pp. 181-182)

The images of incongruity expressed by Hartley and Gibson provide diverse semiotic examples of a point of view that was in opposition to those who desired social and economic equality. The implication of a 'class clash' between middle-class teachers and working-class pupils is all too evident.

W.R. Loader's implication of a headship of a secondary modern school as being inferior to that of the headship of a grammar school is a clear example of conveying a message with a single word, consolation. The interaction between two colleagues vying for the same job in Loader's novel *Through A Dark Wood* (1957) illustrates two contrasting social perspectives. Peter

Robson and Ridley have each applied for the headship of the local grammar school but Ridley withdraws from the shortlist and applies for the headship of Lowgate Secondary Modern School. His rationale for doing so is expressed in a candid manner:

"Of course, I don't regard it as second best. A headship is a headship, wherever it may be exercised. And these secondary schools are very important in the new scheme of things."
Peter understood. Ridley had been offered a consolation prize.' (p.245)

The assumption for many readers would be that connections with a secondary modern school, be it as a pupil or teacher, are, by inference, socially inferior. A polar type of image is created in Ridley's argument in which the two headships represent two contrasting classes, the working-class and the middle-class.

In a similar display of favouring a private education as opposed to state education Allan uses Andreas's mother as her mouthpiece to justify a choice of education for her children based on her own experiences:

"I can't let you miss this chance of living in a healthier place and going to a really good school. I went to a co-ed. boarding school myself and had a wonderful time, and I'm sure that when you've been there a few days you'll think the Grammar a very dull, ordinary place." (p.8)

The quotation that Hollowell cites in her paper 'For the Honour of the School: Class in the Girls' School Story' (2014) is very apposite with regard to Voirrey's mother:

"Middle-class women have played a key role in the reproduction of class society not just through their exemplary role as wives and mothers, but also as standard bearers for middle-class family values, for certain norms of citizenship and also for safe-guarding the valuable cultural capital accruing to them and their families through access to education, refinement, and other privileges." (McRobbie,2009:132-133)

To reinforce the ideal image of a boarding-school education in contrast to that of a grammar-school education the reader is left in no doubt that the transition from the state to the private sector has been worthwhile. Voirrey, with her lower middle-class background, had previously expressed her reservations concerning her move to Barrule House and having to be accepted by its pupils:

"I expect they all come from lovely houses and have gardens and perhaps horses of their own...Perhaps they'll despise us because we only live in a little house in a row and haven't any money." (p.27)

Allan's use of the word 'despise' informs the reader of the cultural chasm that separated children from opposite sides of the cultural divide and provides an intriguing example of literary drama which is subsequently followed by Andreas's and Voirrey's assessment that their mother's decision to move to the Isle of Man was perhaps a wise one:

Andreas: "It seems as though they do things so *thoroughly,* too. I said to Douglas last night didn't he find work an awful bore and he said, 'No, not here, because it's taken for granted that everyone will work as well as they can, and no one bullies and bothers.' Wouldn't you *think* that if no one forces them to do work they'd slack off a bit and have a good time. We always did at the Grammar."

"Yes, but it's different here," said Voirrey rather hopelessly, for so far she had scarcely defined the differences to herself. "The people here are different. Nicer." (p.62)

Although the speakers focus on two different aspects for comparison with the state sector, that is, work ethic and friendships, there is a clear indication that the boarding-school ethos is somewhat superior. The italicised words suggest that the required emphasis will convey Andreas's conviction that Barrule House far exceeds a former grammar school pupil's expectations. In this respect the allusion to Bourdieu's cultural reproduction is wholly representative of cultural transmission of the upper middle-class in which a diligent attitude to school work and social cohesion are the accepted norms.

However, it would be presumptious to say that despite her own educational background the author is advocating that a private education is necessarily superior to that of the upper tier of the tripartite system. It should be noted that in her autobiography, *To be an Author* (1982) Allan makes two intriguing statements. One is that it would be “very dangerous to make assumptions about an author’s personal life, feelings and wishes from her stories...Much may be true, much may be wish fulfilment, but much is just...an author getting inside her characters.” Furthermore, Allan asserts that “Each of my books *is*, in a sense, part of myself.” (p.54)

The issue of class distinction, or even discrimination, is raised in Allan’s novel through the words of either Voirrey or her friends at the High School. As a teacher herself she would have been aware that at the outbreak of World War Two most of the schools in England were predominantly private schools which employed the greater majority of the teachers in Britain. (Calvocoressi,1978;151) The schools that were in the state sector made up a smaller percentage compared to the private sector and provided an education for those pupils who came from the lower middle-class and working-class families. The situation altered quite drastically after the war when the school population rose due to the wartime birth bulge and about 5 million children were being taught in the state system. (Calvocoressi,1978:153) For many parents and children the tripartite system only served to deepen the social distinctions in education in that the grammar school was labelled by parents and pupils as the first class institution and the secondary modern as second class. The public and private schools remained largely untouched by the Act and the elitism that was attached to such schools continued to be equated with privilege and snobbery. Allan makes this distinction in her novel when Voirrey’s High School friend, Betty Marlow, reveals her perception of boarding-schools, those schools possessing “a richly productive vein of mystery and romance”, (Hildick,1970:110) when she says with a tinge of envy:

“Gosh! Fancy going to boarding-school! Will you have dormitory feasts do you think?” (p.16)

It is an iconic image of the girls’ boarding school which provided the public schools with an enviable portrait of escapism and freedom from parental supervision. It also represents a similitude of exclusivity which set the private school system apart from the maintained sector.

1.6.3 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage Three

The continuance of those parents who occupied relatively privileged positions and ensured that their children received a private education helped to maintain the status quo with regard to social stratification and educational inequality. In the state system the grammar and secondary modern schools instilled into their pupils “appropriate levels of aspiration and expectation.” (Parkin, 1971:63) The novels of Trease and Hildick, although they are set in state schools, are quite different with regard to any oblique references to social class. Whilst Trease presents a picture of rural tranquillity Hildick’s novel conveys a bleak image of social deprivation. The latter uses the milieu of Smogbury as a fitting backdrop to elucidate the hardships and temptations of the town’s working-class population.

Hildick’s portrayal of juvenile delinquency, petty crime and vandalism, symptomatic of adolescent male behaviour in urban working-class communities especially when the realities of equality are at their most acute, is illustrated in *Jim Starling* (1958) by Big Smig’s involvement in stealing lead from the roof of St Hilda’s Church and the reporting of vandalism, using a strong regional accent that displayed working-classness, in the cloakrooms of Cement Street Secondary Modern School:

“Some rat’s been slashing us things, sir!” (p.22)

The choice of the school's prefects to ignore such behaviour, "But the two prefects had turned their backs on him" (p.29), reflects Hildick's lament of the acceptance of such anti-social behaviour. Despite their position in the school hierarchy the allegiance to their working-class roots prevented them from being disloyal to their peers and the resulting condonation of the delinquency only adds to the forbidding portrayal of Cement Street Secondary Modern School. This also marked the time when Big Smig was at the point of entry to the market for manual labour, earning £10 a week for sorting scrap metal. (p.10) The mood of discontentment that would have permeated the school-leavers at Cement Street and the petty crime that reflected the juvenile rage against the social system signified for the majority of secondary modern school leavers a drudging acceptance that the prospects of social mobility were severely limited. The principle of 'parity of esteem' that was deemed to be a laudable quality of the tripartite system was seldom recognised by those who had been assigned a place on the lowest rung of the educational ladder. The lack of a significant middle-class intake, unlike the grammar schools, led to a clear correlation between class and attitude. As a former teacher in a secondary modern school up to 1959 Blishen described the students as being "already hugely discouraged – so discouraged that most of them had not even entertained the idea of making any use of schooling of any ambitious kind at all." (Kynaston, 2007:572)

Hildick's novel also elucidates the fact that the social divisions in British society were still relatively robust. Jim Starling's family, representing the subordinate class, was symptomatic of the nature of class inequality for whom a secondary modern education failed to alter the balance of advantages between the social classes. Where there was no or very little vertical social mobility owing to the family's socio-economic status and its relative position in the state's educational system supporting Havinghurst's argument that "the correlation between occupational status and general status is so high that we can use mobility on an occupational scale as a good

index of general social mobility." (Havinghurst, 1958:167) This is also borne out in Tring's novel, *Barry's Great Day* (1954), in which Barry's father, a window cleaner, had read in the *Express* that "there was no chance of a young man getting anywhere unless he had some sort of degree behind him." (p.21) This was sufficient cause for him to become even more anxious about Barry's progress at the Grammar School.

Examples of class consciousness are not uncommon in the school story. Loader's novel, *Through A Dark Wood* (1957), tells of Stoddart, a working-class pupil working for a Cambridge Scholarship under the tutelage of Peter Robson. Although such a scenario would have been a rare occurrence the author's portrayal of class consciousness is made all the more poignant as "Stoddart turned away in the direction of the dense, noisy, swarming estate of council houses while Peter began to walk towards his home in a district favoured by office workers and small shopkeepers." (pp.13-14)

Peter's wife, Isabel, is a model of lower middle-class aspirations. Loader's novel was published two years before the Labour Party's defeat in 1959, a time when traditional working-class attitudes had been eroded by a steady growth of prosperity. Her husband's application for a headship at the grammar school effectively guaranteed a middle-class income together with a middle-class psychology. Her enthusiastic justification for the couple's residential and occupational mobility, now that it was financially feasible, was articulated by Isabel upon her husband's impending promotion:

"And in any case I want us to live somewhere different and better. The longer we stay in this neighbourhood the more I feel our personalities being cramped and moulded into the shape of the other people who live round about, petty grocers and Town Hall clerks and bus inspectors. If we don't move quickly we shall end up being the same sort of persons that they are." (p.25)

Isabel is representative of upward social mobility, a motivating factor for increasing one's economic capital and being eligible for acceptance into a class, or division of class, whereby class would be based on a combination of factors: income, educational background and residence. Her husband's heightened status in the educational world has resulted in her own preoccupation with a heightened perception of a middle-class lifestyle. The couple's socio-economic mobility is one that represents mobility on a scale of occupational prestige and Peter's headship would be a key factor in a re-evaluation of their social status.

Aspiration such as Isabel's was anathema for the majority of pupils who passed through the secondary modern school. With little parental support, especially among the lower working-class, the chances of escaping from the generational cycle of poverty and ignorance of social mobility is envisaged by Croft in a scene of domestic desolation:

"...what ultimate hope was there when they returned at evening to homes where apparently ignorance was a virtue and aspiration beyond it must be exercised with blows and abuse." (*Spare The Rod* p.159)

In the case of middle-class families who were more likely to embody and transmit to their children the sorts of cultural capital which were validated by the grammar school and private school there would be no role model in the households of Hildick's Cement Street Secondary Modern School pupils of the causal link between school success and career success. The undeniable correlation between educational achievement and economic inequality was increasingly evident in the diversity of school stories published in the 1950s as the grammar schools, evinced by authors such as Trease and Tring, were regarded as vocationally supporting the growing middle-class by preparing them for non-manual, professional occupations. Gunby Hadath, on the other hand, maintained the immortal objective of the public school system to breed the nation's leaders and thus sustain the dominance of the capitalist class.

This is portrayed on the occasion of the Headmaster of Milbourne School speaking at the Old Boys' Dinner:

"...I pray that we never discard our public school system. I deem it...irreplaceable. And so much part of the backbone of Britain itself, that we seek, and are succeeding, grandly succeeding, in throwing its advantages and its virtues open to every boy in the land, if we can." (*Playing the Game,* 1950. p.148)

The reference to public schools being "irreplaceable" is evocative of the manner in which they were ignored by the 1944 Act and allowed to continue without change alongside the revised State system of education. the ladder for the aspiring working-class pupil was essentially a bourgeois model which would favour the middle-class rather than the working-class. The somewhat hollow promise of the public school system to welcome "every boy in the land" can be likened to a similar scenario to *The Guinea Pig* (1946) the school had admitted "boys from the council schools", (p.148) an innovation that was deemed by the Headmaster to be irreversible. On consideration that the heritage of the public school system relied solely upon maintaining a moral framework which promoted the endorsement of an existing inequality the fictional novelty of admitting pupils from a 'socially inferior' background seems to be in direct opposition to the ideology of the public school and the continuation of class discrimination. However, when one takes into account Gramsci's model of hegemony the fusion of reality and fiction, that is the Fleming Report and the fictional interpretations of Gunby Hadath and Chetham-Strode, have exposed "the political nature of schooling and point to possibilities for developing alternative methods of pedagogy." (Giroux, 1981:23) This is reflected in the manner by which political positions differ on the desirability of social and economic equality. The successive Conservative and Labour governments in the 1940s and 1950s differed on the need for equality and the equality of opportunity within education. As the Conservatives were largely supportive of the elitism of the public school system which created an unequal hierarchy of schooling the Labour Party

was eager to promote equality and equality of opportunity with the introduction of comprehensive schools in the late 1950s.

The next section will assess how the school story portrayed the less privileged sections of British society in their quest to shape their lives whilst being partially constrained by the social, political and economic determinants which intervened in their efforts. In this respect I will be addressing how the school as an institution reflected the culture of the British social classes during the 1950s.

1.6.4 Critical Discourse Analysis – Stage Four

The connection between society and education is an alliance that cannot be ignored by politicians. It would be inconceivable to imagine a political party not regarding education as a priority in 1950s Britain for at any time “The institutions of society must inevitably reflect the values of that society...Education is one of those institutions of society. It, therefore like all other institutions, is an expression of the basic values of the society.” (Stead, 1942:5) The 1944 Education Act had left the education of the capitalist class unaffected and, as a result, only a proportion of the dominant class in the community could access it. The introduction of the non-fee paying grammar schools, whose curriculum benefitted the more able working-class pupil, became a staple element of a society in which the degree of economic reward meant a rise in social status which had been accepted by the middle-classes as an integral aim of life. At a time when working-class readers rarely ventured far from home and were entirely aware that they could never hope to enter the world of Greyfriars School the perpetuation of social class inequalities in the 1950s is a somewhat disillusioning aspect of the school story.

To look for a more positive picture that related to the adolescent boy or girl one could look to the image of a progressive school which depicted the changing fortunes of the Quilliam children in Allan's novel, *The School on North Barrule* (1952) as discussed earlier in the chapter. Alternatively, a socialistic vision of an equalisation of British society in the 1950s is articulated in Wallace's *Scenes From Provincial Life* (1950) by the newly-appointed teacher, James Felton, as he pronounces that "If the twentieth century has a good feature, this is it: it's shown us, by equalising us, by raising some and downing others, that no one is born a servant, but that we can all have the honour of being servants, if we're up to it." (p.136)

Although the criticisms of the 1944 Education Act centred largely on the reliability and fairness of the 11+ examination they were outweighed by the broader intention of creating a fairer and meritocratic system of education. The secondary modern schools, however, were generally viewed as schools which had been sacrificed on the altar of the ideology of elitism. Yet, in Wallace's *Sons of Gentlemen* (1953) the secondary modern school is viewed in a slightly more positive light than that shown in Hildick's *Jim Starling* novels. Sara, a parson's daughter, is a teacher in a secondary modern school in the north of England although her father's more positive comments concerning the structure and amenities of the school are nullified by an adverse reference to its pupils:

"She teaches in one of those new Secondary Modern schools, up in the north – slap-up place it is, too, charming to look at, built in one storey around two quadrangles, and with oceans of playing-fields all round. Seems almost too good for the type of child who goes there..." (p.75)

In a similar vein an allusion to the generous government funding of the secondary modern schools is once more negated by a back-handed compliment of the pupils' intellectual capabilities:

"...the Secondary Moderns have the Exchequer behind them," said Willingham. "Sara has lashings of equipment, and honestly you'd be surprised at the work her Grammar School failures turn out." (p.202)

Sara's father is representative of those who favoured the tripartite system and its intention of neatly placing children into their respective secondary schools based on the 11+ examination results. Although he is supportive of his daughter's choice to teach in a secondary modern school his positive remarks with regard to the funding of such schools are ultimately undermined by a disdainful comment on its pupils:

"Sara's had it the easy way, her pupils classified for her, and all that equipment!" (p.203)

To balance her father's more prejudiced outlook of the tripartite system the reader is presented with Sara's personal views with regard to the state v private systems of education:

"I think private schools ought to be banned. I think it's awful that any old buccaneer can start a school." (p.252)

The 'bucaneer' in this instance points to a direct attack on Mr Stringer's establishment, Baconsthorpe School. To strengthen her argument for a more general acceptability of the secondary modern school Sara's personal teaching experience validates her observation that:

"Crowds of people with degrees trying to get posts in Grammar Schools, of course, but not a lot of trained Secondary Modern teachers..." (p.252)

Although Sara's comments could be construed as being a partisan comment of the secondary modern school and a talking point that would provide parents and teachers alike with a focus for an ongoing debate on the egalitarianism of qualified teachers throughout Britain's secondary school system. In this respect the Labour Party's policy document on education, 'Learning to Live', published in 1958, proposed to create smaller classes and

appoint better-qualified teachers in an effort to “open the door of opportunity and steadily reduce the influence of the privileged fee-paying schools in public life.” (Kynaston, 2015:244) It was a policy that was focused on reinforcing social cohesion rather than perpetuating social differences.

The contrasting comments of Willingham and his daughter, Sara, in *Sons of Gentlemen* (1953) give a flavour of the diversity of views relating to the tripartite system. Sara’s views reflect the ideological orientation of the Labour government from 1945 to 1951, a “commitment to policies of equal opportunities” and “an education system that...aims at producing a technically efficient, but fairer, capitalist society.” (Hill & Cole, 2001:14) The emphasis on encouraging a more socially just education system with the introduction of the comprehensive school would be made a reality following the Labour victory in the 1964 General Election. It would signal the ending of the tripartite system due to the restraints it imposed on the life opportunities of too many children at such a young age and the way it perpetuated impermeable social class subcultures.

1.7 Concluding Remarks

The texts that have been analysed in this chapter have each contributed to the portrayal of social life in Britain during the 1950s. Even though most of the school stories have been school-based the reader will have cognizance of the layers of society which the novels reflect. The spoken language of the children and parents combined with the authors’ narrative descriptions have effectively contributed to the social constructionist view of discourse by which the reader has gained an insight into particular social identities.

The impact of the novels can be measured by the effectiveness of the interaction of the characters within the discourse communities that have been made up from both school and home. By examining the shared goals and shared values of individual pupils and parents who are representative of

the upper-, middle- and working-classes it has been possible to appreciate how the language signals a particular group membership.

The poignancy of Jim Starling striving to make his mark against all odds at Cement Street Secondary Modern School contrasts with the wealth of opportunities that await the pupils of Melling School or North Barrule School.

In analysing the language that is used in the school stories of the 1950s it has been useful adopt Paltridge's perspective of reviewing the texts "in relation to their social and cultural values." (Paltridge, 2006:47) The emphasis of emotive words such as 'despise' and 'detest', for example, point to the authors' intention of highlighting the attitudes of children whose values and attitudes have been conditioned by their parents and peers. In this regard the aim of the texts is to relate the incidents to its sociological context.

Allan and Biggs, for example, describe unforeseen family circumstances that affect the social status of the Quilliam and Lacey families respectively. The values of pride and determination, however, are put to the test and the respect that the families achieve as a result is very much in agreement with Eleanor Graham's contemporary view that there ought to be "a reliable level of truth and reality behind all children's stories, showing the readers the world as it actually appears to all sorts of people living and working in it." (*The Junior Bookshelf* Nov. 1950:172) In a decade when children were regarded as realists, the majority of whom attended state schools, the public-school stories could still have the potential of helping to widen the gulf between the privileged and unprivileged. The adolescent's societal awareness gained through the school story would be enhanced to some degree by the authors' attention to incidents that portrayed cultural privilege and economic inequalities.

In a similar way to the analysis of the texts in the previous chapter the effectiveness of intertextuality is worthy of consideration. The protagonists of

Stephen Tring's novel *Barry's Exciting Year* (1951) and Hildick's *Jim Starling* (1958) both elicit an awareness of class-consciousness by their reactions to provocations.

Barry's father's occupation, a window-cleaner, is ridiculed by Leslie Bagley who chides Barry with the unflattering doggerel:

"Window-cleaner doing his trick
Like a monkey up a stick." (p.12)

Even though Bagley lived on the same council estate the ensuing fight between the two boys is the result of Barry defending the dignity of his family in much the same way that Jim Starling is supported by his Aunt Julie who is a cleaner at the Roxy, Smogbury's local cinema. The experiences of Barry and Jim in growing up in urban environments that offer limited opportunities for social mobility are significant features that relate the texts to their sociological contexts. The fact that Barry is able to take his place at the local grammar school, as opposed to Jim's more restricted life opportunities, is largely due to Barry's father acting as his 'aspiration agent' (Lambirth, 2010:219):

"Yes, my lad. If you behave yourself and pass this examination thing in the summer, you ought to be a Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School boy at the beginning of next year." (p.45)

Mr Briggs is the social catalyst who recognises the importance of cultural investment, the embodiment of the working-class parent whose values of decency and hard work are replicated in his encouragement of his son's academic success.

By relating the school story texts to their sociological and cultural contexts it is possible to assess to what extent the authors were able to present an overall view of social inequalities.

Hollowell argues that the genre “taught contemporary readers...how to *become* middle-class themselves with the representation of middle-class lives, norms and values.” (Hollowell, 2014:321) This is particularly true of Allan’s novel, *The School on North Barrule* (1952) in which the Quilliam children are taken from their respective grammar schools to receive a public-school education on the Isle of Man. The adolescent reader would be aware of the social upgrading where the injection of financial support impacts on their education and lifestyle. In the case of the Chalet School the middle-class culture is depicted as a Utopian vision of erudite pupils whereby the girls are given “as much freedom as possible.” (*The Chalet School and the Island* 1950 p.55) As scholarly success and guaranteed careers were the accepted norms for such upper- and middle-class girls the genre could be accused of having an outdated attitude towards class.

The concept of education “being the path to liberation and self-improvement” (Hollowell, 2014:321) is one that is vividly constructed in Tring’s novels. In stark contrast to Brent-Dyer’s portrayal of the privileges that accompany a middle-class upbringing Tring’s description of Barry’s struggle to pass the 11+ exam is indicative of the link between the child’s home backgrounds with their performances in school. To reflect the mixed feelings of the fairness of the 11+ exam as being the first step on the path of ‘liberation and self-improvement’ Roberts states that “it is argued that intelligence tests and other apparatus of selection which seem to give all children a fair chance are really ideological devices which legitimize the privileges that the middle classes appear to earn.” (Roberts, 1978:124) Faced with an uphill task to earn his place at the grammar school Barry’s endeavours towards educational success represents that of the working-class child of the 1950s.

Barry's father, his 'aspiration agent', was the exception rather than the rule in stimulating and encouraging their child. To strive for upward mobility would involve sacrifice for many but it still remained that the opportunities in some areas and schools of the nation remained relatively impoverished.

Hollowell argues that "the status of neither individuals nor groups is inherently fixed" (Hollowell, 2014:321) although the school stories that describe the impediments for social equality may tell another story. For many working-class families, including Jim Starling, Roberts would argue that "the pattern of educational inequality does not correspond to the dichotomous contours that split the population according to their subjective class identities and political affiliations." (Roberts, 1978:128) If the intention of the Welfare State was to eliminate poverty and the abolition of fee-paying in state schools would create educational opportunities for all families, regardless of their social and financial status, then the optimism that such measures created was not felt by those working-class families living in Hildick's Smogbury.

The gap that separated the girls of the Chalet School from the boys of Cement Street Secondary Modern School remained as wide as ever. The social inequalities reflected by the success of such advantaged pupils in securing privileges was quite evident. The values of loyalty to one's friends, personal standards and the reputation of the school – whilst these were not bad values they were perhaps not sufficiently in touch with the dilemmas of the modern school-child in the age of television and crowded classrooms.

By referring to the school stories that were published in the 1950s the intention was to elicit a sense of commonality with regards to educational and social trends that had emerged during the post-war period. An indication of contemporary school and social life is made more apparent when the writers explore adolescent character and development through the

characters' dialogue and their relationships within the school setting or their home environment.

The school story based on the traditional boarding-school was a genre that presented an attractive and presentable image of school life due to the exclusion of unacceptable and dissident elements. By presenting such an ideal image the author is informing the wider community in the educational values and virtues embodied in the image which generally tended towards conformity. From a sociological viewpoint the creation of the cultural image of the dominant ideology, in this case based upon the values that were inherent in the boys' public school, was hegemonic. This equated to Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony that popular culture acts as one of the agencies by which ruling classes exerts its authority over other classes, "one which before actually obtaining political power has already established its intellectual and moral leadership." (Joll, 1977: 100) In the school story genre, particularly in the 1950s, the cultural and moral superiority conveyed by the aristocratic and upper class characters was clearly established. The intellectual superiority of the public schoolboy reflected Gramsci's belief that the achievement and maintenance of hegemony is largely a matter of education and that "every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily a pedagogic relationship." (Joll, 1977: 100) For Gramsci the role of intellectuals was all-important and the indulgence of portraying public schools in fictional terms as the greenhouses for perpetuating their authority over the masses was central to the genre. If consent to hegemony is provided by consensus around a set of agreed values and beliefs then the school story played a central role in the creation and preservation of the nation's consensus.

As a contrast to this image, however, the emergence of writers such as Hildick and Tring established a quite different perspective of the school story. The stark portrayal of a post-war secondary modern school in an impoverished northern town and the need to pass the 11+ examination to

gain admittance to a grammar school education and gain a foothold on the ladder of social mobility brought the genre into a new era.

Identification with the characters is an underlying source of gratification in children's literature and the success of the school story during the decade of the 1950s could be attributed to the realistic portrayal of the literary characters in either the private school or the maintained school. Whether the school is situated in the leafy suburbs of Sussex or nestling among the rolling hills of the Isle of Man it is interesting to note that Hildick, the champion of the tough, modern kid of the post-war world, admitted that "even the flattest set of characters take on a plausible appearance of life when caught up in the currents of boarding school routine." (Hildick, 1970: 110)

We see that not all the characters in the school stories are adults, the majority of them being child characters. From a critic's point of view it could also be said that the novels that were set in the maintained sector schools were somewhat truer to life in that the plot related more to the children's experiences. The author's characterisation of the child's emotions is a crucial factor in children's literature and the realism that was portrayed by Hildick, Trease and Allan was both convincing and meritorious. The relationship between the characters was founded either upon a genuine regard for the well-being of each other or seeking the support of others to condemn the anti-social behaviour of the antagonist.

Closely linked to characterisation is the language used by the author to give the characters their identity. The vocabulary used by the characters is quite distinctive in the school story depending on the type of school. Margaret Marshall believes that this aspect of the novel is all-embracing for she argues that "it is the written word which collectively embraces all the features: subject matter, characters and setting, style of writing and use of vocabulary presented from an angle which matches the child's perspective." (Marshall,

1988: 71) The success of Hildick's *Jim Starling* and Buckeridge's *Jennings* series of novels is possibly due to the authors having a better, though limited, observation of character than most contemporary school stories. The combination of such ingredients as slap-dash fun with a racy use of contemporary slang proved to be a formula for success although one should also be aware that language is a changing social usage and nothing dates faster than primary school slang.

The appeal of the traditional boarding school stories up to the 1950s was their perceived aura. This was often quite idyllic and elite although their 'eliteness' could be counter-productive. There were those who believed that the public schools inculcated elitist values and a sense of entitlement to ensure that the balance of power remained with the elite. This perception was certainly intimated in Burgess's *The Mystery of the Missing Book* and, to a large extent, in Cleaver's *Captain of Two Schools.* The more mundane setting of Smogbury in Hildick's novel becomes a symbol of the industrial north in which the individual has to struggle to survive.

The stories of everyday life in schools give a more realistic social picture of the day-school life experienced by the majority than the fanciful tales of boarding schools which had been favoured by previous generations of adolescent readers.

Secondary schools that were key to the tripartite system in the 1950s

Figure 5. Grammar School

Figure 6. Technical High School

Figure 7. Secondary Modern School

Chapter 7

Conclusion

'The hold of the public-school system on the English mind is revealed in its literary aspect, the school story. This is a purely English phenomenon.' (*D.W. Brogan, 1943)*

1.1 Introduction

On the basis of the evidence presented in Chapters 5 and 6 this concluding chapter will draw the threads together with regard to the school story's depiction of social inequalities in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s.

On one level the school stories brought pleasure to the adult readers as the stories reflected their own experiences, although such readers were more probably ex-public school pupils. Whilst the power of the genre lay with the fact that the stories were totally fictional, the Bunter series being a prime example, the school story has always had the potential to mirror society at large. This is certainly the case of authors whose intention was to present fictional stories as a backdrop to elucidate the inequalities of the class system.

Despite Butler's attempt to neutralize the impact of wealth on educational attainment with the passing of the 1944 Education Act it failed to remove the differentials in educational opportunity and the working-class child remained the most educationally deprived. The tripartite system resulted in a segregated secondary education which produced a narrowing of children's occupational horizons.

If school can be regarded as a microcosm of society in which the peer social organization would tend to consolidate the class stratification of the larger community it could be argued that the friendships formed are directly

affected as much by the pupils' social class as they are through individual aspirations. This fact has been proven in the critical discourse analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 whereby pupils from a working-class background have been either shunned by their peers from wealthy families or referred to in derogatory terms by the teaching staff of public schools.

The main research focus of the thesis is centred on the school story's depiction of class conflict and social inequalities and it is the dividing line between reality and the depiction of reality that I wish to address in the next section.

1.2 The school story presenting a realistic framework to depict class conflict

This section will examine the simple dichotomy between fact and fiction and just what kind of truth the school stories of the 1940s and 1950s conveyed to the reader. If one could accept the argument that fiction, rather than being the opposite of reality, actually complements reality then it is plausible to equate the issue of social inequality in a fictional format with the harsher reality of restricted opportunities of working-class families. The attraction of writers such as Hildick and Tring who began exploring the world of the grammar and secondary modern schools in the 1950s was the personal element, the crafting of stories based on people whose behaviour reflected the values of contemporary society.

To protect children from the harsh realities of life was regarded by some children's authors as a priority. Characters created by Blyton, Brent-Dyer and Richards, for example, were stereotypical of the upper middle-class snobs whose comfortable lifestyles had little in common with the boys and girls living on council estates. The attraction of the school stories in the 1950s was the opportunity for adolescents to be able to read fictionalised accounts

of middle-class pupils which were readily recognisable from the previous decade. The cultural realities of post-war Britain certainly provided sufficient material for the school story authors. Those who chose to compose their stories in a language that was unintelligible to a large section of their audience ran the grave risk as being perceived as being out of touch with reality. Articles that had been published during the 1950s in the book trade journal, *The Bookseller*, cautioned potential children's authors that to set all the school stories in familiar backgrounds would be rarely successful with the readers for whom they were intended. The need for adolescent readers to enjoy literature that allowed them to escape from their immediate environment was central to their enjoyment of fiction. In recognition of the social inequalities faced by their working-class readers the novels of Trease, Tring and Hildick pioneered the school stories that were set in state schools and revitalised the more traditional setting of the boarding school.

Literary characters such as Jim Starling (*Jim Starling,* 1958) and Barry Briggs (*Barry's Exiting Year,* 1951) personified the social norms and values that existed in northern England and the reader's identification with a literary character has the potential to be quite decisive in transmitting norms and influencing personal behaviour. In the case of Frank Richards' Greyfriars series, however, reality with regard to the social changes of the 1940s and 1950s was not an issue that required any serious consideration or, indeed, inclusion into the Bunter stories. Although Richards is regarded as having accepted the class system his stories were a representation of his desire to entertain as Greyfriars bore little resemblance to the school life his readers knew. The public school system which Richards' novels seemingly endorsed was buffeted by Buckeridge's *Jennings* whose tales accommodated the gradual post-war transition in attitude towards private education. The novels were acceptable to a middle-class audience when the counter existence of working-class values were not being taken seriously. By the 1950s the reader was certainly exposed to choosing between the glamorous world of

the boarding school which helped to widen the gulf between the privileged and the unprivileged or the school stories that revolved around real children with the faults and failings of inexperience and impetuosity.

In the grey days of post-war austerity Buckeridge's *Jennings* novels were aimed to amuse his readership and it would seem that Buckeridge understood his readership well and his teaching experience may well have stood him in good stead to allow him to combine images of reality with prep school tomfoolery thus combining traditional plots with a gently subversive attitude towards the boarding school milieu.

Popular children's fiction, regardless of which decade it was published, represents a highly contemporary social document. As an artistically mediated form of communication, however, the fiction is shaped by all those who have had a role in the novel's creation ranging from the author to the publisher. As part of the literature continuum children's literature has the capacity to affect the reader's emotional maturity and open up an understanding of the past in addition to provoking an awareness of their own multi-faceted society. The notion that children's literature mirrors social change and inequality has found expression especially in novels whose focus is on family life such as Eve Garnett's *The Family from One End Street* (1937) and Philippa Pearce's *Minnow on the Say* (1955). Children's literature, in the same way as literature of all kinds imitates the society which produces it, has a responsibility to view the world honestly, especially at the culture of the place and period. In this respect the school story has played a particular role in developing a sense of community by which the novels have presented the context of the school and helped to prepare the reader for experiences to come. In representing the possibilities of human experience there is often the overlapping of fiction and reality, the ebb and flow between fantasy and the world of reality as the reader perceives it.

The issue of class is deeply rooted in English life and is intrinsic to most English fiction, not least the school story. Social realism is a facet of children's literature and the school story served as a social document which bears a close relation to the contemporary ideas and attitudes of the society which it reflects. However, the view of reality, of a class-based reality, with all its advantages and disadvantages, would be contingent upon the reader's own situation. The truth that an adolescent reader would see in a school story novel or Chetham-Strode's play, *The Guinea-Pig* (1946) is one that is relative to their own experience or concern.

In a similar fashion to the boys' school stories the girls' stories drew their inspiration from actual social and educational movements and can therefore be regarded as being true to real life. Mabel Allan's novel, *The School on North Barrule* (1952) exemplifies the writing of an author who had been singularly influenced by the educational philosophy of A.S. Neill. Barrule House represented a modern establishment in which an enlightened and progressive education which was centred on self-discipline could result in pupils leaving the school as well-balanced and self-confident adolescents. Allan's portrayal of moving from a conventional state school to a boarding-school, however, reinforced the social inequality that existed in 1950s Britain whereby money could purchase an education which was regarded as being superior to that provided by the state.

In summary children's fiction is intent on providing the reader with a source of entertainment by which she can escape from reality and enjoy and be stimulated by comical situations and characterisations. As school story fiction is capable of either reinforcing or modifying attitudes due to its relationship with the 'real world' the sub-genre has proved to be capable of confronting the reader with reality and entertainment in equal measure. The close approximation to real life as reflected in the novels of Allan, Trease, Tring and Hildick are almost photographic in their presentation. The metonymic

novels of Tring and Hildick, whose plots revolve around personal and social concerns, are distinguishable by their reliance on the real issues of educational opportunity.

The next section will consider the relationship of class and social mobility. It will summarise how the novels evinced an understanding of the total social process of which literature is part and which is a product of social consciousness.

1.3 The school story and its relationship to social mobility

The first subsidiary question relates to the issue of social mobility and its connection to a class society. The social relationships that have been analysed in the preceding chapters strongly relate to a hegemony that existed in British society between 1940 and 1960. The reader of the novels written by Brazil and Brent-Dyer will be acutely aware of children of the middle-class family reinforcing the dominant values of loyalty and academic superiority. The advantage of family wealth is quite evident in the school stories which involve choice of school and consequently affecting the choice of career. This clearly illustrated the extent of social class inequality in society as well as in the context of school. Social class, in the sense of one's socio-economic status, is used to determine the life chances of individuals and the novels that were set in the state school system reproduced the conditions of the existence of a capitalist society as a whole.

The school stories portrayed the fact that the nation's education system was very much bound up with inequalities in pupils' life chances. The girls' school stories especially reinforced the advantages of the children from affluent home backgrounds and having parents with professional careers such as doctors (*Carola Storms the Chalet School* 1951 & *Summer Term at Melling* 1957), stockbrokers (*Playing the Game* 1950) and the aristocracy (*Fortescue*

of the Fourth 1945). Conversely, the working-class parents/carers are represented by window-cleaners (*Barry's Exciting Year* 1951) and cinema cleaners (*Jim Starling* 1958).

Social mobility for the pupils depicted in the public school stories would not have been problematic whereas the novels that were based in working-class areas were more metonymic of the recognisable concern of educational inequality and the depleted prospects of social mobility. Whereas such imagery accentuated the divisiveness of the education system the issue of social mobility represented a measure of equality or inequality which was influenced by an individual's access to professional careers.

Individuals in the boys' and girls' stories became victims of the class system in which class consciousness propels them to steal and falsely exaggerate their family's wealth in order to keep on level terms with her fellow pupils. Even at a young age they have realised that class is a measure of status and that acceptance in the private school system was dependent on one's socio-economic status.

The fact that class is positioned within a stratified and hierarchical social structure of distribution of jobs and income is clearly depicted in *Jim Starling* (1958) and *Barry's Exciting Year* (1951) whereby a working-class community is the backdrop for the protagonists' struggle for an opportunity of social and educational equality. Although Jim Starling's chances of social mobility are severely limited owing to his cultural and educational background the opportunity for Barry to benefit from a grammar school education and the elevated prospects of social mobility stands in marked contrast.

It is perhaps a reflection of Tring's appreciation of educational opportunity that he portrayed Barry as representing the working-class pupil who was selected by ability and not by class. Whichever occupation Barry would

eventually move into there would be no doubt that he would have been more optimistic of his chances in Stillminster than Jim Starling would ever expect in Smogbury although crossing the class line would probably not have led to any serious erosion of working-class values that his parents would have inculcated. Whereas Cement Street Secondary Modern School would have more likely lowered the pupils' ambitions to accord with the limited opportunities in the labour market in Smogbury there would have been a more positive ethos at Stillminster Grammar School.

The social and educational significance of the grammar school with regard to the working-class pupil as a stepping-stone for educational opportunity is widely represented in the stories in which grammar schools provide the backdrop for the novels. By accepting gifted pupils regardless of class the social composition of the grammar school was considerably wider than the public schools. With a greater population of working-class children and the exclusion of the less-gifted children of moderately rich parents the more successful academic pupils were to disprove the widely irrational theory that paying for an education was not necessarily better than one that was free.

The expansion of the lower middle-classes following World War Two brought with them a sense of ambition and respectability who desired at least a grammar school education for their children. Their parents, the majority of whom were artisans and manual workers, had left school at 14 but appreciated that the grammar school inculcated virtues such as hard work and genuine scholarship.

The 'social levelling' of the grammar school was possible as the income of the parents and the pupils' social background were not taken into consideration resulting in the pupils mixing with those of similar intelligence but with differing backgrounds and home experiences. Those who

progressed to higher education would most probably benefit the more having been educated in a school which was not socially exclusive.

In conclusion the school stories of the 1940s and 1950s clearly depicted that a grammar school education was an effective stepping-stone for social mobility. The power of social class operating through the educational process was evident in the majority of the novels that have been referred to and, as Savage argues, the private schools provided a means of educational attainment which could be bought and duly augmented the existence of the independent sector. Such inequality was likely to cut across the line of social mobility, blocking ascent to, and limiting descent from, the upper reaches of social status.

The next section will make a final assessment of the association of the school story with the findings of sociological studies that were carried out in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s.

1.4 The school story and its relationship with sociological studies of the 1940s and 1950s

The second subsidiary question of the thesis relates to the degree of support that school stories give to the sociological studies carried out in Britain between 1940 and 1960. The previous section indicated that the aspect of social mobility is one of the most sophisticated branches of empirical sociological enquiry and the London School of Economics' study, carried out in 1949, was the first British mobility study. The first of its main conclusions was the type and level of education attained by the subjects who cooperated in the investigation depended very heavily on the father's social status as measured in terms of occupation. This finding is certainly supported by the private and public school story in which the pupils' experience of a privileged education and enhanced life chances were based entirely on their parents'

ability to pay for such an education. The study also found a positive and significant relationship between parental and filial status at all levels of the status hierarchy, especially at the upper levels. This is a characteristic that is prevalent across the school story genre and leads one to examine the role of an individual's education in producing a powerful association between parental and filial status.

As far as social stratification is concerned the reorganisation of the state secondary school education in 1944 reproduced the advantages of the middle-class over the working-class pupil and should be regarded as probably the most important measure of the first half of the twentieth century. In effect a secondary modern school education, with its lowered social status compared to the grammar school, offered limited academic achievement. As more middle-class parents preferred to send their sons to a traditional grammar school the sociology of the school became a major factor in a parent's choice of school and in this regard Glass' analysis was concerned with the social status or social prestige, not with social class in the Marxian sense of the term. Moreover, it portrayed a society with considerable inequality tempered with the anticipation that greater quality of opportunity for educational success would follow.

The school stories written by Trease and Tring which described the arch rivalry between the grammar and secondary modern schools accurately portrayed the fact that the social aspects and consequences of an educational system are not less important than the pedagogic aspects. This is certainly made apparent by Andreas and Voirrey Quilliam in *The School on North Barrule* although Hildick would not be drawn into making such a statement in his novel *Jim Starling.* Hildick, like other teachers who were teaching in the state schools in the decade following World War Two, would have been aware that the social and educational opportunities offered to the public and grammar school pupil were heavily weighted to those with an

upper- and middle-class background. The children of professionals and businessmen disproportionately won free grammar school places created by the 1944 Act and were six times more likely to pass the eleven-plus exam than working-class children. (Kynaston, 2009: 147) Undoubtedly the school stories reflect the diversity of opportunity in that the size of a family budget and the deep socio-cultural divide separating the working-class from the rest of society were a formidable combination.

With regard to the school story this fact is reflected in the social ostracism that remained a powerful sanction in the life of the dominant class. This is manifested in a range of novels including Chetham-Strode's *The Guinea Pig* (1946), Gunby Hadath's *Playing the Game* (1950) and Brazil's *The New School at Scawdale* (1940) which emphasised the rigid social demarcation line between pupils from the lower middle-class stratum and those who were welcomed into a school based on their parents' higher social standing. The combination of the unbending conservatism of Lloyd Hartley and the smug hypocrisy of Grimmett in *The Guinea Pig* is allied with Mr Square's reservations with regard to the admittance of county council schoolboys to Milbourne School, a public school that is steeped in tradition and wholly dependent upon the substantial fees of its wealthier parents.

The combination of teaching staff and pupils viewing the working-class and the lower middle-class in a subordinate role would have been a characteristic of larger boarding schools whose introversion was responsible for the exclusion of outsiders. It was certainly an attitude of mind which contradicted the universal endorsement of the meritocratic concept in Glass' 1949 survey in relation to attitudes to social mobility. The combination of a good education and hard work were key to accessing upward social mobility and this is reflected in Tring's *Barry's Exciting Year* (1951) and *The Old Gang* (1947) in which the protagonists, Barry and Joe respectively, are representative of the working-class and middle-class youth whose work ethic is instrumental in gaining the necessary educational qualifications for entry into higher

education and the heightened prospects of a higher standard of living than their respective parents. In both cases the grammar school provided an opportunity for the boys to acquire an orientation towards their desired place in the adult world where the public school privileges were unattainable.

One of the main findings of Martin's 1952 Hertfordshire survey revealed that the further down the social scale one went, the less serious parental thought was given to a child's secondary education. The study concluded that the influence of the home background on the children's educational prospects is more subtle and that the dilemma of utilising their ability to the full is more of an educational issue rather than social. This fact is depicted in the contrasting 1950s novels of Croft and Wallace in which the authors delineate working-class pupils as demoralised individuals.

Such contrasting images of the educational system which existed in Britain during the 1950s reflect the intimate relationship between the educational system and the social order. Although there were still major social inequalities in the 1950s, despite a time of comparative affluence for the aspiring working-class, most children still had predetermined life chances. It could be argued that the grammar school did at least make provision for a pupil to work alongside his intellectual equals from which he would not be excluded either by the poverty or social status of his parents. This was a case in point involving Barry Briggs in Tring's *Barry's Great Day* (1954) whose marked progress at Stillminster Grammar School is complemented by an expansion of his social horizons through his liaison with Jill Verney, the daughter of Sir Arthur Verney. Barry is representative of the small and highly selected minority of working-class free place pupils who were expected to be assimilated and become socially mobile, making the most of a grammar school education by remaining at school at least until the age of 16. With regard to social mobility it would appear that the grammar schools provided

an academic education for the downwardly mobile pupils from the upper middle-class families whilst acting as a socializing agent for the upwardly mobile working-class boys.

The grammar school, however, was not always the panacea for social inequality. The cause of much role-conflict for lower working-class boys in such schools was because their ascriptive family roles had a strong working-class cultural component whereas their school roles were tied to middle-class aspirations of mobility, deferred gratification and achievement.

Conversely, the private and public school system continued to exist because of the desire to perpetuate a class system that was thoroughly undemocratic and which remained undeterred in its defence of class-consciousness.

In its distinction between public and state education which was riddled with the worst kind of class-consciousness the British educational system during the 1940s and 1950s had undergone the amendment to an educational system that was necessary in order to address the fluidity in the nation's social structure. For a country's economy to flourish it was necessary to recruit the best talent regardless of social background but by the end of the 1950s the polar type of image of Britain's society still persisted, a society divided into two contending classes.

As the British education system was arguably an open manifestation of class distinction with the perpetuation of social differences as its most important characteristic, the school story also depicted education as an expression of the basic values of society. The genre showed the relationship between education and the social order, regarding education to be seen not only against the backdrop of society but as an integral part of it.

Social class and the school story's portrayal of the values of the British class system is the theme of the thesis' final subsidiary research question and will be explored in the next section.

1.5 The school story and the cultural values of the British class system

Children's literature and its concern with social issues and values is particularly relevant to the school story genre. In encapsulating such a range of sociological concepts the school story, regardless of how simplistic it may appear, is not innocent of sociological implications. In this respect the school story commits itself to exhibiting a social function of defining and sustaining group values in addition to narrative plots which have a cognitive function supplying a meaningful organization of social attitudes and relationships.

In the analysis of school story texts in Chapters 5 and 6 the dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis was employed as the preferred process to investigate the sociological aspects of the class system as cultural values are in part semiotic. Although fictional in its treatment of the subject of the class system the school story was a powerful agent in bringing to its audience of adolescent readers a story that presented social change which was brought about by shifts in the dialectic process of class struggle.

The depiction of the cultural values that were associated with the stratification of British society from 1940 to 1960 in effect created a social documentary of the British way of life. The novels expressed certain values in educational institutions which reflected the range of cultures that were indigenous to the various classes, a relationship in which there are clear and obvious connections between the quality of a culture and the quality of its system of education. As a preparation for an individual to play his/her part in society it is vital that the general education that the individual receives is the

best that can be given and that a particular set of attitudes and values are passed on as a result. The continued existence of a network of private education may or may not have been socially desirable in post-war Britain but the public school story, replete with its images of grandeur and exclusivity, continued to depict the social inequality of an education that was accessible by the few.

Although the 11+ examination attempted to redress the balance by bringing together former fee-paying middle-class pupils and bright working-class children the 1944 Act exonerated the upper middle-class from the imbalance of a real opportunity for social mobility. Whilst Butler's intention in constructing the 1944 Act may have been to improve the life chances and cultural capital of a certain percentage of the working-class it would be a source of frustration that educational mobility did not translate directly to social mobility and that the older system of the dominant class still prevailed.

The class struggle was portrayed in the school story on three interrelated levels: economic, political and ideological. Central to all forms of exploitative relations is economic exploitation which played a central part in the private and public school stories. The upper middle-class value of exploiting personal wealth is a recurring theme in the stories relating to private education. The delusive imagery used by Blyton, for example, was intent on exaggerating a life-style that lower middle-class pupils would aspire to.

Through constant allusions to the products of wealth the reader is continually presented with a value that was pertinent to the upper- and lower middle-class; that of hard work bringing just rewards. Access to private education was possible for a scholarship child regardless of his/her social background. The conflict of cultural values is appreciated by referrals to scholarship pupils who are anxious not to disappoint their parents due to disappointing test results or the inability to adopt the upper middle-class values relating to

affluence and aspirations. The material issues of comparative wealth and poverty tended to dominate not only the fortunes of the school story pupils but also dominate the political agenda of the changing governments.

From an ideological viewpoint the class system in Britain was governed by a dominant value system that was represented by the interests of the relatively privileged section of the community. The frustration of such inequality is quite often portrayed in the school story by acts of vandalism and petty crime that prevails in urban working-class communities. The petty criminality carried out by Big Smig in Hildick's *Jim Starling* (1958) and Joe's middle-class perception of a gipsy boy as being a "frightful old thief and poacher" (*The Old Gang* (1947, p.74) typify members of a subordinate value system. In this sense the school story genre gives a strong emphasis relating to social divisions and social conflict and quintessentially emphasises class consciousness.

The rivalry between the pupils of the grammar school and the secondary modern school in Tring's *The Old Gang* (1947) exhibits the relationship between stratification and ideology in which the structure of educational opportunity should be a source of enlightenment but instead exacerbated the discontent that was felt by the majority of secondary modern pupils. The portrayal of an ideology that was concerned with dominance/subordination relations was never more evident than in the school stories which presented teachers performing the function of ideological control, "serving the interests of capital contributing to the ideological domination of the future working-class." (Harris, 1982:125) An abundance of examples to illustrate this point would undoubtedly include the public school stories including Chetham-Strode's *The Guinea Pig* (1946), Gunby Hadath's *Playing the Game* (1950) and *The New House at Oldborough* (1948), all of which celebrated the teachers' and headteachers' function of ideological control over the pupils.

1.6 Concluding Remarks

As a genre the school story, despite its move towards more realistic constructs of school and social experiences, still allowed the reader to retreat into an alternative world. The working-class could still envisage life in a boarding-school and the boarding-school pupil was equally free to visualise the less constrained world of the grammar and secondary modern school. The element of wish-fulfilment in allowing the reader to step across class boundaries was an integral part of the school story's appeal. The wider scope of school situations that appeared in the late 1940s and 1950s affirmed the readers' existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that was aligned with the attitudes and interests of a very mixed reading audience.

On the basis of reading and analysing a wide range of school stories which were published between 1940 and 1960 one cannot be unaware of the complication of class and snobbery which existed at every level of English society, the seemingly unspoken conviction that individuals would only be comfortable alongside others of their own kind. The preceding chapters have tried to explain how the disadvantaged, both socially and educationally, have been portrayed within the context of their educational institutions to belong to a society that was hierarchical in terms of status, income and formal knowledge. The acceptance of the lower working-class to spend the major part of their lives carrying out menial work was an attitude that would be passed on to their children without reserve. Alongside this acceptance of social oppression and exploitation was the acquiescenceof the 1944 Act, a selection device which, for the majority of the working-class, did little to further their own cultural improvement. It was this acceptance of the prevailing social relations which they themselves perpetuated and which the school story related to educational opportunity that gives credence to the genre as a literary document which reflected a changing historical situation.

In this respect this thesis has attempted to assess the accuracy and credibility of how the school story provided a realistic framework to portray the class struggle and to evaluate on that basis the extent of social inequality that existed in Britain between 1940 and 1960.

The thesis has moreover shown that the school story genre offered a wide variety of narrative discourse to illustrate the extent of the influence on the distribution of educational opportunity of the material environment in which children lived at home. More than most other genres the school story reflected society as it wished it to be, as it wished to be seen and as it unconsciously revealed itself to be. Within the Marxist tradition it has long been recognised that literature is a product of the historical and social formations that prevail at the time of its production.

The conflict between middle-class literature and popular literature in Britain is a class-related issue that lies at the heart of social stereotyping in children's literature in the twentieth century. Based on the assumption that the majority of children's authors would have had a more or less clearly defined image of their society being stratified in some way or other it would be a justifiable claim to say that this thesis has shown that the school story played a substantial role in depicting both class and status aspects of social inequality in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s.

The empirical research on which this thesis has been based has highlighted the fact that the rhetoric of class conflict was just beneath the surface of a cross-section of school stories published in Britain between 1940 and 1960. The implementation of critical discourse analysis of such texts has a certain historical value in analysing a relatively early stage of a profound transformation in education in Britain and placing it in the context of class conflict that was an integral part of such changes.

Figure 8. Elinor Brent-Dyer

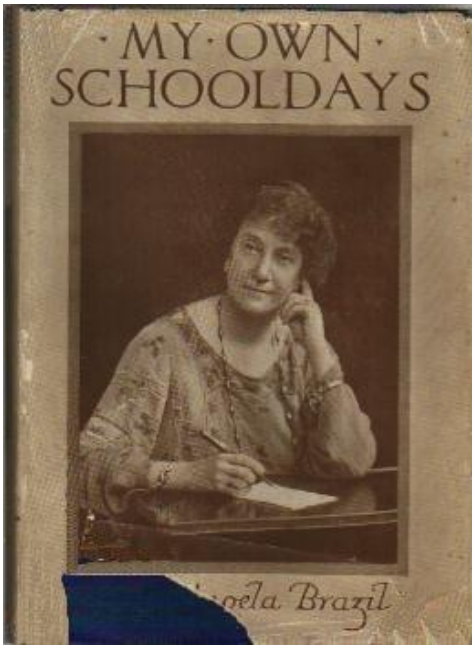

Figure 9. Angela Brazil

Figure 10. E. W. Hildick

Figure 11. Geoffrey Trease

Appendix A

Glossary of Educational Terms

Boarding Schools

These schools were part of the private sector of education and were predominantly for pupils aged over 13 years of age. The pupils would have been accommodated in houses belonging to the school during term-time under the supervision of a master or mistress.

Butler Act

This was the alternative name given to the 1944 Education Act in recognition of R. A. Butler who was the President of the Board of Education. The Act stipulated that local education authorities (LEAs) would be responsible for providing 'a varied and comprehensive service in every area.' From April 1945 fees were abolished in maintained secondary schools and the school leaving age was to be raised from 14 to 15. Local education authorities were subject to provide alternatives to the tripartite system. The Act organized education into three stages – primary, secondary and further.

Child-centred education

This is an approach to education that places the child rather than the subject matter at the centre of the educational process. It is a version of progressive education that was central to A. S. Neill's philosophy and was practised at his school, Summerhill. Mabel Allan, the author of *The School on North Barrule* (1952), was greatly influenced by Neill and elements of progressive education can be found in her school stories.

Comprehensive Schools

In the years following the 1944 Education Act and the establishment of the tripartite system the government Circular 144/1947 defined a comprehensive school as ‘one which is intended to cater for all the secondary education of all the children in a given area without an organization in three sides.’ The first comprehensive school was opened in 1954 at Kidbrooke in London.

Direct Grant School

This was a type of secondary school, usually a selective grammar school, which received a grant direct from the government. It was given on the understanding that a proportion of places was reserved for children from primary schools to be paid by the local education authorities. This arrangement ceased to operate from September 1976. After this date the direct grant schools either joined the maintained system or became private schools.

Elementary Schools

These schools offered an education for children from 5 to 14 years of age. They existed until 1944 and taught a curriculum that normally consisted of the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic), geography, history, elementary science and physical education.

Eleven Plus (11+) Examination

This was a test which was administered by local education authorities for entrance into selective secondary schools. Those pupils who reached a high enough mark in the examination were eligible to go on to the grammar schools. Those who did not achieve a pass mark would go on to a technical school or a secondary modern school. Widespread dissatisfaction of the examination in later years and the introduction of comprehensive schools led to the ending of selection procedures by the majority of local education authorities.

Fleming Report

A Committee, chaired by Lord Fleming, was appointed by R. A. Butler in 1942 to consider ways in which the association between public schools and the general education system of the country could be developed. The Committee reported in 1944, prior to the passing of the Butler Act. Schemes A and B were proposed for achieving closer links between the systems. Scheme A would allow local education authorities (LEAs) to have the right to reserve a number of places, day or boarding, at schools accepted by the Board of Education. The LEAs would make payments direct to the schools concerned. Scheme B was designed for the boarding schools only which qualified pupils could attend. The report had little influence on the course of events and the links between the two sectors were never forged. Warren Chetham-Strode's play, *The Guinea-Pig* (1946) was based on the recommendations of the Fleming Report.

Grammar Schools

With a history that originated in the fourteenth century the grammar schools were originally endowed by its founders to provide free education to children within a locality. By the time of the 1944 Act the grammar school became part of the tripartite system of secondary education which had a predominantly academic curriculum. Entry to a grammar school was dependent upon gaining a pass mark in the eleven plus examination, thus aimed at teaching the most intellectually able pupils. The emergence of comprehensive education led to the disappearance of the grammar schools in many of the LEAs.

Grant Maintained Schools

These schools were supported by a central government grant instead of funding from a Local Education Authority (LEA). Conservative governments encouraged schools currently maintained by LEAs to apply for a grant

maintained status. In theory a grant maintained school could still have the characteristics of a comprehensive, grammar or secondary modern school.

Independent Schools

These are schools that are not in receipt of grants from Government or LEAs. These include public schools, the majority of preparatory schools and some former direct grant schools.

Parity of Esteem

The original intention of the 1944 Education Act that children should be regarded as ‘equal’ irrespective of whether they were allocated to a grammar, secondary modern or technical school.

Preparatory Schools

Preparatory schools, or prep schools, are fee-paying schools for children of 8 – 13 years of age. During the 1940s and 1950s these were predominantly schools for boys which prepared them for entry into British public schools. Girls of a similar age normally attended private schools. They were mainly single-sex schools and provided boarding facilities.

Private Schools

This is a general label that may be attached to any school not financed by either LEA funds or a central government grant. Also called independent, fee-paying or non-maintained. Some are ‘public’ schools. The quality of these schools can vary, as they are often not subject to the sort of inspection that maintained schools now expect.

Public Schools

These are independent fee-paying schools, the majority of them are boarding schools. Schools such as Eton, Westminster and Winchester were founded by endowments on similar lines to the grammar schools. Unlike the grammar schools the intake of many public schools is not restricted to their immediate locality. They were unaffected by the 1944 Education Act.

Secondary Modern Schools

The White Paper on Educational Reconstruction in 1943 foreshadowed the 1944 Education Act by recommending three types of school which is often referred to as the tripartite system; grammar, technical and modern, corresponding to supposed psychological categories of pupils. The schools catered for the majority of adolescents between the ages of 11 and 15. Dissatisfaction with the status of the schools was increasingly voiced by teachers, parents and politicians. The lack of progress towards the 1944 Education Act's promise of equality of opportunity led to the reorganization of secondary schooling on comprehensive lines.

Technical High Schools

As part of the tripartite system the technical schools were recommended for those pupils who had a practical aptitude rather than a broad academic ability. The passing of the eleven plus examination was still required but the schools would provide a curriculum which would be based, in part, on the engineering industries. In this respect the schools had equal status with the grammar schools.

The Tripartite System

The reorganisation of secondary education following the 1944 Education Act was based on a system of selective and non-selective schools. The selective schools were the grammar and technical high schools whereby pupils leaving the primary school had to pass the eleven plus examination to gain

entry. Those pupils who did not pass or did not sit the examination were given places at the local secondary modern school. Movement between the schools was admissible at a later stage depending on the pupils' academic ability.

Appendix B

Examples of novels to illustrate different themes in children's literature

Facing and overcoming fear

Looking for Alibrandi (1992) Melina Marchetta

Josephine (Josie) Alibrandi is a 17 year old Italian-Australian girl. In her final year at school she faces the stresses of important exams in addition to the reappearance of her father after an absence of 16 years. Combined with an uncomprehending grandmother and her anxiety to do well in her exams Josie finds solace with Jacob. With his help she becomes more confident to take control over her own life choices.

Good versus Evil

Northern Lights (1995) Philip Pullman

Lyra, the lynchpin of Pullman's Dark Materials trilogy, is presented as a wild tomboy who does not let her Oxford college guardians stop her from throwing herself into local gang warfare. Her more dangerous pursuits include foiling the attempted murder of her uncle, Lord Asriel. Lyra draws upon all her reserves of courage as connections emerge between the disappearance of children; Lord Asriel's business in the far north and the preoccupation of her new guardian, Mrs Coulter, with a mysterious substance called Dust.

Coping with bereavement

River Boy (1997) Tim Bowler

At the heart of the novel is the relationship between Jess, a 15 year old girl, and her dying grandfather. Although he is dying he is determined to revisit the valley where he grew up. Jess and her parents accompany him and come to be fascinated by a river that dominates the landscape. For the grandfather, it is the subject for a painting to entitled ‘River Boy’, despite the absence of a boy. In the course of her early visits to the river, Jess becomes aware of the presence of a mysterious teenage boy who is also a gifted swimmer. She accepts his challenge of a 40 mile swim. Her grandfather’s death coincides with the disappearance of the boy, but not before he has suggested that Jess help complete her grandfather’s painting.

Conflict of nature and urbanization

Keeper (2003) Mal Peet

The novel weaves South American myths and concerns about the jungle environment into a ghost story. Set in a fictional South American country the novel explores the destruction of the jungle and along with it, the way of life of the indigenous people.

The Power of the Imagination

Switchers (1994) Kate Thompson

The novel’s 13 year old heroine, Tess, lives in Dublin where she meets Kevin who is almost two years older. She soon discovers that, like her, Kevin also possesses the ability to ‘switch’ – that is, to assume the form of any animal they choose. They embark on a hazardous journey to the North Pole where

their abilities to transform themselves stand them in good stead. The novel is an engrossing fantasy celebrating the richness of the human imagination.

Abandonment

Homecoming (1981) Cynthia Voigt

Written by an American author the novel deals with the life of a 13 year old girl, Dicey, who is left in charge of her three siblings after their mother abandons them in a shopping centre car park. Their walk to Connecticut in the hope of meeting up with an aunt whom they have never met comes to nothing. Eventually they find their estranged grandmother where Dicey struggles to keep the family together.

Secrets

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole (1982) Sue Townsend

This novel records the trials and tribulations of Adrian's adolescence. It chronicles fifteen months in the young diarist's life including his candid thoughts about his parents' extramarital affairs and his obsessive adoration of Pandora Braithwaite. The diary serves as a record of other personal events in his life, a chronicle of people and events with which the juvenile reader will identify with immediately.

The Nature of Heroism

Peeling the Onion (1996) Wendy Orr

Seventeen year old karate champion, Anna Duncan, is hit by a car and wakes up in hospital with a broken neck. She is told that she will never walk without a walking-stick. A year later she falls in love and begins to confront the restrictions placed on her life through her injuries. The theme contains a

strong message of hope in that heroism will inevitably involve elements of strength and optimism.

Development of Moral Responsibility

Dear Nobody (1991) Berlie Doherty

The novel concerns itself with two high school lovers, Helen and Chris, and an unwanted teenage pregnancy. Once their secret is out they move from their isolation to becoming aware of their moral responsibilities to their child with the support of their families. Helen, especially, has to face up to the challenges of being a teenage mother. Ultimately it is a story about accepting responsibility for one's actions.

Interpersonal Relationships

Across the Barricades (1972) Joan Lingard

Set in Belfast during the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland this is the story of Kevin, a Catholic, and Sadie, a Protestant. The couple are drawn to each other despite their religious differences and it is their friendship which courts disaster in Belfast's split community. When Kevin is beaten up and Sadie's former teacher's house is petrol-bombed it proves impossible for them to remain together in the city. Their eventual decision to move to London is a clear indication of the strength of their relationship.

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